

MIND YOUR OWN BUSINESS

The Case for Municipal Housekeeping

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PREFACE

ALTHOUGH *Mind Your Own Business* is a new book, it should be stated that a similar book under the same title was published in 1905 by The Clarion Press. This has been out of print for some time, but its usefulness may perhaps be estimated by the fact that the title has for many years been adopted as the "slogan" of municipal housekeeping propagandists all over the country. Mr. Bernard Shaw, whose *Common Sense of Municipal Trading* (published about the same time) is still freely in demand, remarked once that his book and *Mind Your Own Business* were "the only two books on the subject worth reading." The author of *Mind Your Own Business* has often been asked to bring out a new edition, and here presents an entirely re-written version, which he hopes may receive as warm a welcome as the first, though he scarcely dares to expect that Mr. Shaw will be impelled to reverberate. . . . The thanks of the author are due to Mr. Willet Ball, editor of *The Railway Review*, for permission to reprint the chapters following, which appeared originally in the pages of that periodical.

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MIND YOUR OWN BUSINESS

THE CITIZEN AND THE COUNCIL

EVERYONE is convinced that if people, other people, would mind their own business, the world would be a better place to live in. Every man flatters himself that he does mind his own business. Much more so every woman. Yet it is quite easy to convict quite half of these very virtuous citizens of the crime of neglecting their own business by asking them the shattering question: When did you last vote in a Parish Council, Borough Council, District Council, or County Council election? . . . When did *you*?

You may think voting for Councillors is no business of yours. You may say that you leave that sort of thing to those who understand it. You may ask scornfully, what's the use? Well, I hope to prove to you that voting for Councillors is your business, that you are neglecting your business in leaving it to be done by other people, and that voting for Councillors is a duty which, properly performed, brings handsome rewards.

If someone suggested that because you do not vote you must be a savage, your feelings would be hurt. -Mr. E. D. Simon, a late Lord Mayor of Manchester, wrote recently: "A City Council's services mean the difference between savagery and civilisation." The same may be said of the services of all our Councils. What services exist is decided by the

votes of the citizens. If you do not vote, what are you?

It is perhaps not entirely your fault that you take no part in managing what I call our municipal house-keeping. The young person, as young persons ever did, takes things for granted. He is born into an environment in which there is a vast deal of municipal housekeeping, and he notices it no more than a fish notices the water in which it swims. He lives, maybe, in a municipal house, and hardly knows it. He lights his municipal gas or switches on his municipal electric light: how commonplace! He washes in the municipal water: what a bore! He walks in the municipal streets: he never heard of others. He rides on a municipal tram or 'bus: how ordinary! He reads in a municipal library. He plays tennis in the municipal park. He falls sick, and is taken to the municipal hospital on the municipal ambulance. He dies, and is buried in the municipal cemetery. One dam thing after another, and all municipal, and many more. Gifts of nature, he assumes. . . . And he never votes for Councillors.

There are citizens who accept, and partly pay for these municipal services who think they are provided by Corporations and Councils, bodies with which they have no concern. This is a profound error. The municipality is the whole body of citizens, and the services and business undertakings they manage are the property and the responsibility of all the citizens. The Councils and Corporations are merely the directors of the municipal services, elected by the votes of the citizens to carry out their desires.

The careless citizen who does not vote may never think of himself as a landowner, an owner of numerous productive undertakings, a capitalist, and employer of scores of thousands of his fellow citizens. Yet, as a citizen, he is all these. How did he become such? Through the work and the sacrifice of citizens who *did* vote, and he still enjoys the benefits of municipal housekeeping because of the work and sacrifice of citizens who *do* vote.

To-day we citizens own vast undertakings and properties of the value of two or three thousand million pounds. Amongst them are 1,000 water-works, 246 gas undertakings, over 300 electric undertakings, and 167 tramway undertakings. We own thousands of miles of streets and roads, thousands of schools, halls, libraries, museums, markets, hospitals, and other buildings. We own docks, piers, parks, and cemeteries.

We carry on a variety of services and businesses too numerous to enumerate at length. We own land in many places (Newcastle has estates and property worth £6,000,000). At Brighton, Doncaster, and Chester we own a racecourse. At Luton, Abingdon, Basingstoke, and elsewhere we own corn exchanges. At Bradford we own a conditioning house for textiles. At Colchester an oyster fishery. At King's Lynn we own a theatre. At Conway the famous castle is our own. At Bristol, Penzance, Falmouth, Jarrow, and other ports we own docks and piers. At Bradford we own a railway. At Manchester we are part owners of the Ship Canal. We make streets and roads, we manufacture tar and paving stones,

we manufacture trams, 'buses, and wagons. We run milk depots. In some districts we control the police force. We provide concerts and run restaurants. We conduct food markets, hospitals, and sanitary services. We bury the dead.

A hundred years ago scarcely any of this vast wealth existed. Owning and controlling it, we are lords of our lives to a degree undreamed of by the citizens of 1829. Municipal housekeeping has brought civilisation where before was savagery. To-day, the average citizen's expectation of life is nearly twenty years longer than that of his forefathers, and that boon is due largely to the forethought, the labours, and the sacrifices of those who instituted our municipal services. It is not the only benefit for which we owe them thanks. Life for us is healthier and happier in a score of ways. Are they not worth a vote, at the least?

The careless citizen does not vote at the Parish Council, Town Council, District Council, or the County Council elections. Does he ever realise that in *not* voting he may be voting against the continuance of the municipal services, the benefits of which he enjoys? What happens to the man who neglects his business? He loses it, sooner or later.

This great municipal inheritance is ours, to have and to hold and to increase, or to mar and to lose. Which is it to be? It is mine. It is yours. Am I not talking the commonest common sense when I tell you to Mind Your Own Business?

THE WHY AND WHEREFORE OF MUNICIPAL HOUSEKEEPING

THE careless citizen who learns that in this country £400,000,000 a year is spent on municipal house-keeping may be moved to ask why the needs of the community represented by this huge sum are so provided. He may have heard the champions of private ownership and private enterprise declare that all the needs of the people can be provided best and cheapest by a person or persons working for profit.

The careless citizen might ask himself first whether the claim of private enterprise is proved even with respect to the primary needs of the community—food, clothing, fuel, and shelter. Is not much of our food poor in quality and adulterated? Many millions of our people do not get enough food for proper nourishment. Most of our population are insufficiently clothed, and much of our clothing is made of shoddy material, which may be cheap, but is certainly nasty. As to coal, millions of our people never have enough for warmth, and, having to buy in small quantities, the coal they get is not cheap, but dear.

The private traders reply that they can supply pure food, clothing, and coal if there is an effective "demand." This is evading the point. The needs of the people are the demand. The demand is always present. What is lacking is the ability to organise

production in such a way that the natural demand of the people is translated into effective demand. In this private enterprise fails, and must fail, because what ability it possesses is largely nullified by its greed.

Take the last primary need—houses for shelter. All last century private enterprise in this industry had a clear field. What is its record? Never once in that period did it succeed in coping with the housing needs of the population. Moreover, it actually failed to supply the number of houses for which there was a money "demand." Twenty-five years ago Mr. George Haw wrote in *No Room to Live*: "There are people to-day in our workhouses who would come out to-morrow could they get shelter elsewhere. But they cannot, *even at excessive rents.*"

After a century of private enterprise house building there were in 1911 nearly 4,000,000 people *without a house*. Over three-quarters of a million *families*, who had to crowd into dwellings already occupied. In some districts, as Northumberland, nearly one-third of the population lived in a condition of overcrowding. In England and Wales there were 405,000 tenements, with four rooms and less, whose occupants were overcrowded. At the 1921 Census overcrowding in some areas was still worse. In London 16 per cent. of the population was overcrowded. "The figures indicate a deterioration of housing conditions in both urban and rural areas," said the Census report.

Of course, there was a war, but we were not at war during the whole of last century. The war lasted four years. There was a war between 1911 and 1921,

and in that decade the working-class dwellings built numbered only 357,000, whereas the need was for 866,000 at least, a shortage of 509,000. Since then we have built 1,000,000 houses, partly by private enterprise, partly by Government and municipal housekeeping. Obviously, we are still a long way in arrears of the needs of the people. Mr. George Hicks calculates that, allowing one house to two married couples, we need every year 150,000 new houses, and, in addition, 80,000 to 100,000 to replace old and decayed houses. On its past record, private enterprise cannot be trusted to supply this number, not to mention quality and price. In respect to the primary needs of the people it has failed miserably to prove its competence.

Now let us turn to those necessities of civilisation—water, light, and tramways and 'buses. Why have we 1,000 municipal waterworks, 300 municipal electricity undertakings, 246 municipal gas undertakings, 167 municipal tram undertakings? In nearly every case these services have been taken over by the municipalities because the existing private enterprise service was bad, inefficient, and dear.

The supply of water has been municipalised more than any other service. Even the champions of private enterprise realise that a plentiful supply of pure water is absolutely necessary for the health of the people. But it is only a quarter of a century since London ousted the private enterprise supply, which was controlled by eight companies, who had discovered that they could fleece the community

more effectively by combining to keep up prices. It cost £47,000,000 to buy them out, and that is why water in London is still dearer than it might have been. In Aberdeen, which municipalised its supply sixty years ago, the cost of water is only half as much.

Private enterprise boasts of its superior efficiency, but time after time municipal housekeeping has exposed this fraudulent claim. For example, many years ago Liverpool City Council bought the electricity undertaking from a private company. The price was £400,000, which gave the company a clear profit of £150,000. That is to say, the Liverpool Corporation had to pay interest and sinking fund contributions on a dead weight of £150,000. What happened?

The company price for lighting was $7\frac{1}{2}$ d. per unit, and for power 5d. In a very short time, under municipal management, the charges were reduced to $3\frac{3}{4}$ d. for light and 2d. and 1d. for power, and the Corporation, after paying interest and sinking fund charges, had a surplus of £10,000 for relief of the rates.

The history of municipal tramways is largely a story of the transfer of inefficient private enterprise undertakings at high prices, and their transformation into convenient and well-equipped services, paying better wages, and charging lower fares to the citizens. Glasgow, for example, which took over the trams in 1894, at once reduced fares from 30 to 50 per cent., reduced the hours of tramwaymen four hours per day (not per week), and increased wages by 5s. per week, plus free uniforms.

These examples could be multiplied *ad lib.* The why and wherefore of municipal housekeeping, then, is just this—the awful failure of private enterprise. It is this that has compelled us to mind our own business.

THE PRINCIPLE OF MUNICIPAL HOUSEKEEPING

THE champion of private enterprise will tell you that he is not in business for the benefit of his health. It is also profoundly true that he is not in business for the benefit of your health. The ruling motive of the private trader is profit. In pursuing profit he may, to some extent benefit the community, but that result, when it occurs, is only incidental. It is a piece of luck for the public.

Now, when the citizens decide to mind their own business, they go into business with an entirely different motive. Their object is not profits and dividends. Their object is the welfare and convenience of all the citizens. They *do* go into business for the benefit of their health.

The difference between these two principles is as wide as the poles. It is important that this should be grasped, because in discussions on the question it is often assumed that the methods can be compared on the same basis and judged by the same tests. They cannot. The sole test of the success of private trading is cash profits. The question to be asked

of municipal housekeeping is, does it conduce to the convenience, the health, and the happiness of the community?

The careless citizen is sometimes apt to think that because we speak of municipal "trading" in gas, and trams, and electricity, these undertakings are trading undertakings in the private enterprise sense. They are not. Strictly speaking, there are no municipal trading undertakings. They are all services. The fact that some of them make cash profits and sometimes cash losses is perhaps confusing, but in reality it is not a contradiction of the municipal principle.

Even the careless citizen who does not vote, directly or indirectly pays the cost of municipal services in the form of rates. In the case of such services as education, dust collection, sewerage, street maintenance and improvement, parks, police, lighting, and libraries, he pays his share of the exact cost. He does not talk of cash profits or losses in connection with these services. He does not think of them as trading enterprises.

Municipal housekeeping may be compared with private housekeeping. The household expenditure is provided by the wages of one or both parents, and maybe some of the children. Food, coal, and clothing are purchased out of the common fund, and no one expects a "profit" to issue from these transactions. The welfare of the family is the sole object desired.

Now when we come to municipal "trading" undertakings, gas, trams, and electricity, is the principle governing the provision of these services

any different? Not at all. They differ from the other services, not in principle, but in the methods by which their cost is collected from the citizens. They are established, not to make cash profits, but to conduce to the convenience and health of all the citizens.

Some day these services may be "free," as education is free, the cost being collected through the general rates. In the meantime charges are made for their use as being the best method of administering financial justice. It so happens that in some cases "cash profits" are shown, and in other cases "cash losses." Ignorant of the true principle of municipal housekeeping, many people assume that cash profits are a sign of success, and cash losses a sign of failure. In the first case it is said that municipal management "pays." In the second that it does not "pay." Let us look into this.

When "cash profits" are made by a municipal "trading" undertaking, what becomes of them? Generally they are used to reduce the rates for the other services. That is to say, they go back into the pockets of the citizens. When "cash losses" are made, the deficit is met by levying an extra rate on all the citizens. Thus, in the long run, the service is provided at cost price.

A citizen of Birmingham, for example, reads that the Corporation have made a total "cash profit" of £120,000 on the trading undertakings, gas, electricity, and trams. If the whole of this sum is used to relieve the rates, the general rate charge will be perhaps 6d. in the £ less, with the result that what

has been overpaid in charges for the trading services is returned to the citizens.

Whether the general rate ought to benefit from cash profits accruing to municipal undertakings, or whether profits should be used to reduce particular charges is a question much debated. Usually the object is to provide an efficient service as near cost price as possible, but in many cases cash profits or cash losses must emerge, as it is impossible to forecast exactly either income or expenditure.

The careless citizen seldom realises that the municipal services are sold to him at cost price. There is no profiteering in municipal housekeeping. He buys education, streets, libraries, parks, baths, and municipal concerts at just the price they cost to produce. What does he buy from private enterprise on these terms? Nothing. Everything he buys from the private trader, bread, beef, beer, boots, coal, or cinemas is loaded with a profit. Yet the careless citizen is oddly enough much more likely to grumble at the burden of rates than at the burden of prices. He doesn't understand.

Immediately he does understand clearly the difference between the principle of private trading and the principle of municipal housekeeping, he will see that it is impossible to judge the value of the latter by the tests applied to private trading. When he hears the enemies of municipal "trading" calling for its restriction or extinction on the ground that it results in "cash losses," he will ask for all the facts, and having got all the facts, he will then apply the proper tests.

For example, last year there was a "cash loss" of £24,000 on the London County Council trams. Is this a proof of the failure of municipal housekeeping? Not a bit. Am I worried about it? Not in the slightest. Because I know that raising the fares only one-tenth of 1d. would wipe out the loss. I know, too, that if the L.C.C. trams were not burdened with unfair charges for street improvements, and capital costs, the accounts would show a surplus. I know that the profiteers would like to get hold of the L.C.C. trams, because if they did they could scoop in £3,000,000 a year extra profit merely by raising the fares 1d. Will they do it?

Not if we mind our own business.

BETTER HEALTH AND LONGER LIFE

YESTERDAY I walked through miles of London's streets, and at the end my boots were as clean and shiny as when I started. Had I lived in the era before we began to mind some of our own business, I should have had to plough through mire and mud, and slime, and dodge the sweepings from butchers' stalls, the refuse of houses and shops, dead dogs and cats, and garbage of every kind. Yesterday, except for an occasional whiff of petrol, my nostrils were not assailed by any objectionable odour. In the earlier age, the noisome stench was so all-pervading that it was rarely mentioned. Some of it arose from the bodies of the dead, buried, as in St. Paul's, Covent Garden, so thickly and so near the surface,

that their emanations woke sleepers in adjacent houses.

Our passion for cleanliness to-day has been developed by municipal housekeeping, not by private enterprise. Not very long ago every householder had to do his own street cleansing, and he had to keep a lighted lantern in front of his dwelling. To-day these and many other services are provided by the Council or Corporation, and how cheaply and efficiently! How much do you think it costs you per head for the collection and disposal of your house refuse, and the cleansing of your streets? If you live in a large town, a little over $1\frac{1}{2}$ d. per week. What does this trifling expenditure save you?

In the good old times your ancestors died like flies from plague, typhoid, small-pox, and other deadly diseases. The sickness rate to-day alarms us. It used to be four times as high. One reason for the betterment is drains and sewers. Do you ever think of sewers? No, not even when you grumble at your high rates.

How many citizens of London of the "Do you know?" variety know that the London drainage area covers 160 square miles, serving a population of 6,000,000? How many know the interesting fact that the average daily outflow is 270,000,000 gallons, representing a stream 23ft. wide and 5ft. deep, which proceeds day and night at the rate of three miles an hour? How many know that London has 380 miles of sewers, and that 2,500,000 tons of sludge are dealt with by five vessels working every day? How many know that London has spent

£15,750,000 on this scheme, and has repaid £9,000,000 of this borrowed capital?

"A hundred years ago," says Mr. A. Emil Davies, in *The Story of the London County Council*, "the Thames was the main sewer, house drainage was hardly existent, the water supply was in the hands of a number of companies which took it from the dirtiest part of the Thames and did not filter it, housing conditions were in a terrible state, and epidemics, including cholera, were frequent." All over the country similar conditions prevailed. What local government existed was controlled by private interests, bodies described by a commission of inquiry as "nests of political corruption." The careless citizen, the greedy citizen, the ignorant citizen had no use for municipal housekeeping.

We are not yet an AI nation, but we have moved. And the greater part of the improvement in health and well-being is due to the emergence of a public spirit which has been bitterly assailed and meanly handicapped by the profiteers in power both in the local councils and in Parliament. In the teeth of this inhuman opposition, the progress achieved has been remarkable. Take, for proof, the astonishing fall in the death-rate and the practical extinction of several diseases which used to ravage the nation.

In his last annual report Sir George Newman, chief medical officer to the Ministry of Health, tells us that the total death-rate and the infant mortality rate of the nation have been halved within four generations. The mortality of childhood is one-third what it was 80 years ago. A child born to-day may

expect to live 17 years longer than a child born in 1846. Is life a boon? Old people are paying fantastic prices for the chance of another ten years through gland treatment. Old rich people who grumble at the rates they have to pay for our health services.

Two centuries ago 500 children out of each thousand born died in their first year. In 1911, in one ward of Birmingham—the best governed city in the country!—the infant death-rate was 331 per 1,000. Last year the average for the whole country was 70 per 1,000. That figure 25 years ago was 154. There are many black spots now where the death-rate is still as high, and higher, as at Norwich, where in the unhealthy area the rate in 1925 was 157. An unhealthy area is an area in which private enterprise has worked its will.

We all profess to believe that human life is sacred and ought to be preserved to its full limit. It is only municipal housekeepers who practise what they preach. In 1846–50 our death-rate was 22.4 per 1,000. In 1921–5 it was 10.9 per 1,000, notwithstanding the enormous increase in population. “The seven public medical services,” says Sir George Newman, “. . . have changed the face of England.” Notice that word “public.” It means that in this we have been minding our own business.

How much would you be prepared to pay for twenty years of life? Half your income? You would jump at the offer. Yet thousands of citizens grumble when they are asked to pay 1s. in the £, perhaps a pound or two a year, for all the health

services which have given them this longer lease. Not rs. in the $\frac{1}{2}$ of their income, merely that amount on their rateable value based on the rent they pay.

Rates are a nuisance. Yes. But the grumbling citizen should know why they are sometimes so burdensome. Writing of that cinder-heap town of squalor, Middlesbrough, some years ago, Mr. Laurence Gomme said: "Almost everything that private capital has done for the people is bad, and before the work of the municipality can be said to have fairly begun it has got to clear the ground for operations." There you have it. Rates, the cost of municipal housekeeping, are high because we did not begin soon enough to mind our own business.

THE CHILD AND THE SCHOOL

THE careless citizen, if he have children, must send them to school. But there are few, even amongst the careless citizens, who resent this compulsion. Times have changed. A century ago the determination of the rich and well-to-do to withhold education from the poor was perhaps no more emphatic than the indifference of vast numbers of the poor to its desirability. To-day the passion for education for their children is general in all classes, but amongst the rich and well-to-do there is still a widespread and deep determination that a full education shall be reserved for children of their own class: so ill-educated are they.

Mr. Bernard Shaw has described schools as prisons.

That most of them were, once upon a time, is true. The children themselves thought of them as penal establishments. They were to a great degree places of torment. They may be prisons to-day from the ideal educationist's point of view, but an astonishing revolution in the opinion of the children has taken place. Fifty years ago vast numbers of children hated school. To-day most children love school, and are loath to leave when their time comes. A short time ago I visited two of our up-to-date schools, an elementary and a secondary. I saw there none of the sullenness, sulkiness, and lack of interest which used to be so prevalent. The buildings were large, well-planned, light, airy, and warm, and the furnishing and equipment were admirably designed for convenience, comfort, and efficiency. Teachers and children seemed like a happy family, and whatever the defects of our educational methods, the "atmosphere," at any rate in our best schools, is not one of them.

Defects, shortcomings, even cruelties, still abound in our schools, but the progress we have made is indubitable, and this advance has occurred since we resolved to mind our own business in education in 1870. Prior to this date the only education "authority" was the parish overseer, who under an Act of Elizabeth had "to set to work and apprentice all orphans or neglected children." Of course, there were a number of schools before 1870, Church Schools and National Schools, established by public-spirited bodies, but they did not attempt to meet the full needs of the population, and only those

who could afford to pay the fees could educate their children.

To-day we have over 21,000 elementary and special schools with nearly 6,000,000 pupils, staffed by 161,000 teachers of various grades. We have nearly 1,500 secondary schools with nearly 400,000 pupils, and a teaching staff of more than 17,000. Then there are 23 universities and university colleges, most of which are partly under State control. Thus every child in the country now obtains some education, a few can enjoy the fullest education possible, that is to say the children of the well-to-do, and a tiny minority of the children of the poor, say 1 per cent., can climb the "educational ladder" and share the same advantages, if they are advantages, and about this there are differences of opinion, more especially amongst the rich, who are very doubtful of the benefits of university education for the poor.

Municipal housekeeping has during its existence done many paradoxical things. For example, in the matter of education. The first care of a sane parent is to see that his children, before their minds are educated, are well fed, well clothed, and are generally physically healthy. One would have thought that municipal housekeepers, having to assume the parental rôle, would have been even more careful on this point, endowed as they are with collective wisdom. But when the reader remembers that many of our City Fathers have been and are still imbued with a congenital hatred of education, a fact which is obvious as soon as one hears them

make a speech on the subject, the reason for our neglect of the bodies of our children is plain.

Nevertheless, we move, but we have only begun to move in this respect during the last 21 years. In 1907 an examination of the school children of Bradford showed that only 22 per cent. were clean, 49 per cent. were somewhat dirty, 25 per cent. were dirty, and 3 per cent. were very dirty. As to clothing, again 22 per cent. were good, 42 per cent. were average, and 36 per cent. were bad or very bad. With respect to nutrition, of 2,000 children examined, 1,019 were below normal. The boots of 6,500 were too awful for words. Such conditions prevailed all over the country.

In the same year an Act was passed empowering the local authorities to institute medical examinations of the children and to supply medical treatment. The early examinations disclosed a shocking state of affairs. In 1910, for example, 13 per cent. suffered from malnutrition, 69 per cent. from dental disease, and 20 per cent. from disease of the nose and throat, while 17 per cent. had defective vision and 11 per cent. defective hearing.

In his report for 1927 Sir George Newman has a less sombre picture to draw. He says: "I do not think there can be much doubt that the physical condition and capacity of elementary school children throughout the country shows definite improvement during the last 20 years. The child of to-day is taller, stronger, and heavier than the child of 1907. He is a better nourished child. To what is that due? The medical care and supervision of the child both

before and during school life is producing its effect. . . . There has also been great reform in the social life of the people, better housing conditions, better feeding, more cleanliness, better clothing, and more fresh air."

What has produced this encouraging improvement in the health of our children? Not private enterprise, but municipal housekeeping. Yet in the face of this testimony to the results of using common sense in education, and exercising common humanity in the treatment of our children, the champions of private enterprise are busy "economising" in expenditure. The careless citizen votes, by not voting, for starving the bodies and minds of the children. *Is he minding his own business?*

NO ROOM TO LIVE

IN the matter of housing the record of municipal housekeeping is rather heartbreaking. In fact, it can hardly be said to have a record, unless it be a record of carelessness. I do not suppose that in a hundred years we, as citizens, built more than 100,000 dwellings for the people. We ought to have built 4,000,000, at least. Since the war the municipalities have built another 500,000, and already the ghoulds of private enterprise have engineered a slackening in our activities.

It is eighty years since the first Housing Act (the Shaftesbury Act) was passed. In 1885 there was a Royal Commission on the housing problem, one of

the members being the Prince of Wales (the late King Edward). Hopeful reformers thought that this Royal interest in the question would result in creating a public determination to abolish the evils of housing. They did not know their champions of private enterprise, or the nature of slum landlords, and jerry builders, and careless citizens who do not vote. However, an Act of Parliament was the issue in 1890, a really valuable Act, and it must be admitted that the careless citizen who does not vote was almost as guilty as the champions of private enterprise for the ill use of the powers it gave to remove slums and build new houses. More Acts followed in 1909, 1919, 1923, and 1924. We have built roughly 500,000 municipal houses, and State-aided private enterprise has built about 350,000, but the record of housing conditions is still heart-breaking.

At least, I hope it is. I am told that this generation has no sentiment. It is hard and "practical," and likes to face realities. Cut out the sob stuff, as the landlords, profiteers, sweaters, and slum owners' representatives so often remark in the House of Commons. I can scarcely believe in this callousness being universal, for I observe that people still like to see children made happy. A short time ago I saw a paragraph in a newspaper headed, "Sixty-three Children Happy." Naturally I read it. I, too, like to see children happy. Why were they happy?

It appears that the medical officer at Feltham had reported that certain tenements were "in a terrible state," beyond repair, and the tenants were ordered

to close them. They appealed to the magistrates, one of whom, with a builder, examined the tenements and concluded that repairs were possible. Hence the joy of the sixty-three children, who would otherwise have been turned into the street.

Sentiment? Surely. Did not the great hearts of the hard-faced men, who got rich during the war, throb with sympathy when they read how these slums had been preserved for the children? At the same time it seems to me a perverted kind of sentiment. I much prefer the old-fashioned kind of sentiment of Charles Dickens, the sentiment which during the last fifty years has reduced the death-rate by half, built 500,000 healthy dwellings, fed hungry children, and provided free literature, and swimming baths for millions. There has never been enough of it, or there would be no children "happy" for the privilege of living in a slum, and no babies in slums whose only toys are the vermin which crawl up the walls of their dwellings. After all, "is it not more practical and cheaper," as Sir Lauder Brunton once remarked, "to spend pence on children than pounds on paupers?"

The truth is that it is only people with sound sentiment that are really practical. It was people of sound sentiment who got the string of Housing Acts placed on the statutes. These Acts gave wide powers to the local authorities to devise practical plans for coping with the housing problem. If the powers had been fully used, the face of England, in respect to housing, would have been transformed before the war. Why was it not?

Take the Act of 1890. Under this Act, councils were empowered to build working-class dwellings either inside or outside their areas, whether there was an actual shortage at the moment or not. Think of that. It sounds like a fairy tale. How was this remarkable gift of power used? I will quote one figure in answer. In the year 1914 the councils of England and Wales spent the enormous sum of £565,000, and built the tremendous number of 2,465 houses. This was in the urban districts. The Rural Councils in the same year spent nearly £200,000, and built 872 houses, a total of 3,337. Do you wonder that we still have 3,000,000 slum dwellers?

Again, look at the powers given by the Acts for slum clearances. Any twelve ratepaying citizens may compel the medical officer to report on any suspected area. If the report condemns the area, the Council must (*must*) prepare an improvement scheme if they have sufficient resources. They must rehouse the dishoused, and they must compensate the slum owners, although they may make deductions if the houses are unfit for habitation, and so on.

Well, up to the end of 1914 we had spent nearly £3,000,000 on slum clearances, and since then I believe we have spent another £2,000,000. Think of it! And in one town, Dundee, a short time ago they were considering the closing of 2,000 slum dwellings at a cost of £1,000 per dwelling, £2,000,000 in all.

Of course, the "practical" men who rule in so many of our Councils will say that we have not sufficient resources to do more. This is mere bunkum.

The solution of the disarmament problem is to disarm. The solution of the housing problem is just as simple and a good deal easier. It is to build houses. The resources needed are labour and materials, both of which we have in abundance. What the "practical" men on our Councils mean when they say we have not the resources means really that they know we have the resources, but they are jolly well not going to have them used if they can prevent it. Hitherto, to a large extent, they have prevented the use of our housing resources. And why?

Simply because the careless citizen does not vote, and allows the Councils to be dominated by profiteers and jerry builders. As the author of *The Ragged Trousered Philanthropists* said: "They are the enemy," the careless citizens. Still, we have something to be thankful for to the people of sound sentiment. There would be 33,000,000 in the slums had they not taught us to mind our own business a little.

CLEANLINESS AND CULTURE

THANKS to municipal housekeeping, it has been proved up to the hilt during the last fifty years that the poor are not where they are because they are what they are, but that they are what they are because they are where they are. A facetious writer once dubbed the masses "the great unwashed." It was meant as a taunt. It was really an indictment of the slum builders, the rich and well-to-do, whose

ancestors, two or three centuries earlier, were themselves "the great," and likewise the "unwashed."

As usual, municipal housekeeping had to supply the shortcomings of private enterprise. In 1846 we got the Baths and Washhouses Act, and to-day the Town and District Councils own 600 separate baths or bathing-places. Are they enough? Scarcely. Our City Fathers do not believe in spreading next to godliness amongst the people too widely or too rapidly. Still, we have moved.

Manchester, for example, has invested nearly half a million pounds in baths and washhouses. The terrors of washing day have been abolished for 10,000 or 20,000 women, and the horrors for as many men, and four times as many children. For an average cost of 9d. the family wash is done in pleasant surroundings, with the most up-to-date machinery.

Then there are thirty swimming-baths, where children from school are supplied with free towels, costumes, and soap, and taught to swim. After school they can swim for a penny or a halfpenny. There are free baths for the unemployed. There are vapour baths and there is one Russian bath. In one year nearly a million and three quarter people paid for admission. Manchester may be mucky, but its inhabitants at this rate will soon take the cake for cleanliness.

Again, take the provision of free libraries. How astonished the Gradgrinds of the early Victorian era would be could they wake up and witness the development of these municipal institutions since 1850.

Manchester, I believe, was the first to take advantage of the Act, and in 1927 that city's libraries lent nearly 2,500,000 volumes. At its reference library, the largest in the world, nearly 400,000 volumes were consulted, at its commercial library 96,000, and at its foreign library over 8,000 volumes.

The imagination boggles at the attempt to estimate the indignation of Mr. Gradgrind could he learn that 30 per cent. of the children of Bethnal Green are readers at the public libraries, and, most paralyzing fact of all, that the favourite author of many of them is Shakespeare! And how shocked that "practical" educator would be could he walk into one of the young people's rooms now provided by some libraries and see the youngsters in an environment of flowers and pictures, and books not altogether concerned with "facts."

Yes, we have moved, but think of it! Until 1919 a city like Manchester could not spend more than the proceeds of a 2d. rate on libraries without special permission of Parliament!

Since the war we have begun to develop enthusiasm for playgrounds for the people. Of course, we have some parks and playgrounds, but once more the tale is the same—there are not enough. In 1846 Manchester had a spasm of park fever and raised the money for three right off—nearly ninety acres all told. Then the citizens went to sleep. In 1891 there were only five parks and eight open spaces—160 acres.

To-day Manchester owns seventy-six parks and open spaces, covering 1,771 acres. There are sixty-

four bowling greens, three hundred and sixty tennis courts, two golf courses, bathing pools, sand gardens, and, most wonderful of all, free Punch and Judy shows! Oh, dear! Oh, dear! Oh, dear! This department of municipal housekeeping costs £160,000 a year. Does it pay? Well, since 1900 the death-rate has fallen from 22 to 14 per 1,000. What do you think?

Visitors to London go into raptures over the extent and beauty of its parks. Of the beauty there is no question, but the idea that London is richly dowered with open spaces is a delusion born of the visitor's impression that the West End is representative of the whole of the Metropolis. In proportion to its area and population London is not so well off as Manchester.

Seventy years ago the only public pleasure grounds in London were the nine parks—Hyde Park, Kensington Gardens, Green Park, St. James's Park, Regent's Park, Primrose Hill, Greenwich Park, Victoria Park, and Kennington Park. To-day the London County Council controls 117 parks, gardens, churchyards, and open spaces, with an acreage of 5,183. These include Victoria and Kennington, previously under the control of the Office of Works. The cost of maintenance is £300,000 a year.

When we know that one child in twenty will suffer a street accident, and that nearly 10,000 so suffered last year, we realise that London's open spaces are still woefully inadequate. All over the country, in fact, even in rural districts, the need for more playing grounds is clamant. Why do we not heed the cry?

In many towns, helped sometimes by generous wealthy citizens, we have provided for ourselves art galleries and museums, aids to culture, which are more and more appreciated as the standard of education rises.

"Almost all I know about the classical subjects," wrote Mr. H. H. Neilson in the *Railway Review*, "I got from the contemplation of pictures and statuary, such subjects as 'Pan,' 'Venus and Anchises,' 'Helen of Troy,' and 'Psyche.' They awakened in me a spirit of inquiry, and there close at hand . . . I found the service of good books. . . . And all this because I was a citizen (of Liverpool)." Such is the testimony of one who has learned to appreciate the achievements of those who were wise enough to provide these municipal blessings. He, at any rate, is grateful that in this we mind our own business.

MUCKY MILK, OR MUNICIPAL MILK?

ONE Sunday morning about thirty years ago the sanitary officials of Clerkenwell took a number of samples of the milk offered for sale. They found nearly 50 per cent. of them to be adulterated. One sample had been skimmed to the extent of 90 per cent. and 23 per cent. of water had been added. Private enterprise was minding its own business.

Incidentally, but of course not on purpose, private enterprise was slaughtering infants by the thousand. Many of them died of dirty and diseased milk. An intelligent farmer voiced the popular private enter-

prise view in the observation "that if God had intended milk to be clean, He would have put the cow's udders at the udder end." We are a little more civilised to-day, but only a few months ago a Thirsk councillor remarked that it "was better that the poor should have mucky milk than none at all." Why should anyone drink mucky milk? We can supply clean and pure milk—if we mind our own business.

St. Helens began it. The infantile death-rate was terrible. Spurred into action by a nurses' society, the Town Council opened a depot for the sale of sterilised milk. What was the result? In a very short time, instead of being at the top of the list of infantile death-rates, St. Helens took an honourable position near the bottom. To-day (in England and Wales), there are over 1,500 Infant Welfare Centres, where nursing and expectant mothers and infants are supplied with milk and other foods at cost price. Municipal housekeeping. Does it pay? The infantile death-rate has been reduced by half, and pure milk is one of the causes.

Why not pure milk for everybody? If you are well off you can buy it. If you are poor, you must still take chances. Manchester Corporation in 1920 appointed a committee of inquiry into the milk supply. They reported that the quality of the milk supplied in Manchester was abominable. They said that two-thirds of the milk supplied to the hospitals was so dirty that in New York its use would be restricted to cooking and manufacturing purposes.

The committee showed that by municipalising the

milk supply the city could save at least £70,000 a year, after paying the cost of compensation to private dealers. Thus, the whole people could have clean and pure milk, with unestimated benefits to their health and longevity. Did they decide to mind their own business? On the contrary. They rejected the recommendation, and voted for mucky milk. Why? Because the careless citizens who do not vote had permitted the kind of councillor who prefers mucky milk to municipal housekeeping to dominate the council.

During the war the Rotherham Council established a municipal milk supply, and so kept down the prices of the profiteers. After the war, the Government refused to continue their powers. The Government also curtailed the milk supply for infants. How many died in consequence?

When we mind our own business only a little bit, the results are often so astonishingly beneficial that one would suppose the careless citizen would be galvanised into asking for more, and seeing that he gets it. Municipal gas? Yes. Municipal coal? Oh, dear, no. He prefers to pay through the nose for private enterprise coal, and in addition to pay the cost of inspectors who go about trying to protect the silly, careless citizen against the frauds and shortcomings of private traders.

The London County Council spends £100,000 a year in watching the private trader, that is, some of him. In 1927 the inspectors examined 27,136 loads of coal in transit, and weighed 3,052 tons. Fifty-seven sellers were fined. The inspectors also tested

1,500,000 weights and measures, and found 38,000 inaccurate. What a farce it all is! Under the latest Food Act we are to have another 1,000 inspectors. Why not mind our own business, and abolish all this foolery? If the community makes its own bread, it is to no one's interest to adulterate it. If the municipality builds its own houses, it is no one's interest to scamp the work. How absurd for Manchester to spend £200,000 to £300,000 a year in "looking after" contractors, instead of doing its building entirely by direct municipal labour!

Sometimes the benefits of municipal housekeeping are wantonly thrown away. Between 1919 and 1922 the Borough Council of Greenwich reduced the infantile death-rate to 57 per 1,000, less than half the figure in 1918. Two years later the figure had risen to 74, which meant that 17 infants per 1,000 were being murdered. By whom? By the careless citizen who in the interim had allowed the council to be captured by so-called "economists."

If someone took a baby to a careless citizen and requested him to be good enough to strangle it, he would be violently indignant. Yet not long ago careless citizens were in effect strangling 100,000 babies a year, and not even blushing in secret. We have found that we can save the lives of more than half this number by selling pure milk at cost price. If we flatly refuse to do this, what are we?

Then, knowing that we can, as citizens, produce things and supply ourselves at cost price, why should we not all benefit by the system? Why should the advantages be confined to the necessitous? At

Hackney, for instance, the profiteers attempted a few years ago to prevent the sale of municipal dried milk to any but the necessitous, on the ground that the chemists were deprived of their 100 per cent. gross profits. Fortunately, they did not succeed. The private traders, of course, say that this is unfair competition, but on their own principles it is perfectly justifiable. This, however, is a problem I hope to deal with later.

At present I will only say this: if the private individual has a right to mind his own business, have not the citizens a right to mind their own business?

A THOUSAND MUNICIPAL HOSPITALS

THE average citizen scarcely gives a thought to hospitals and infirmaries, except when he is badgered for subscriptions by the voluntary institutions. In his rates he pays for the upkeep of municipal hospitals, and may be ignorant of their existence, unless he or some member of his family catch a fever, or break a bone, or be seized with consumption. Yet we have minded our own business in this respect to such an extent that we own 1,000 municipal hospitals, which contain as many beds as all the endowed and voluntary hospitals together.

This is not a bad record considering that the attack on insanitary conditions did not get going until about 1850. As usual, municipal housekeeping had to step in to supplement the wholly inadequate

efforts of the voluntaryists, who have never been able to squeeze enough money out of the wealthy to provide sufficient centres of treatment for the sick and injured. Even to-day there are queues of would-be patients waiting for a chance to get into the hospitals. At the same time there are empty beds in the Poor Law hospitals, but even when these are taken over by the municipalities, there will still be a shortage of nearly 80,000 beds. Obviously we have not been minding our own business vigorously enough, and part of our slackness is undoubtedly due to our unintelligent admiration for the voluntary system.

We are compelled to pay taxes for Navy and Army as defence against a probable or possible enemy. But against disease and accident, ~~enemies~~ that are always attacking us, we depend for half our defence on voluntary subscriptions, and some of us glory in the method. If a man falls sick, or breaks a leg, we get up a concert or a whist drive or a dance, and if there are any profits we have him tended. Or we take round a hat and beg for money. If there is no profit, or no money—what? The sick and injured may suffer and die. They do. Is this humanity? It is not even efficient profiteering.

Our insured population of 15,000,000 lose in one year 26,000,000 weeks of work through sickness, most of it preventable. The rest of the population probably suffer as much. Say 52,000,000 weeks. Or a million years for one man. At £3 per week we lose in production £150,000,000, and, in addition,

the enormous cost of tending the sick. Is this business management? Yes. Isn't it?

In the main, our thousand municipal hospitals deal with infectious diseases, but under the Public Health Act of 1875 authorities have power to conduct general hospitals. Why do we not cover the whole ground? Many municipalities contribute funds towards the upkeep of voluntary hospitals, but this is a mere stop-gap measure—and it does not stop the gap.

Fortunately there are gleams of common sense on the horizon. In the near future the Poor Law hospitals are to be turned into municipal hospitals, which are to be encouraged to work in closer co-ordination with voluntary hospitals. The object is, as ~~Mr.~~ Neville Chamberlain said, to ensure "that nobody should be deprived of institutional treatment." The next development is obvious. All our hospitals will become municipalised. "As institutions supported by voluntary public charity," wrote a medical officer recently, "the voluntary hospitals cannot endure." The sooner they are abolished, the better for our reputation for sanity.

Think for a moment of that infectious disease, tuberculosis, with its death toll of 40,000 per annum. In 1924, and again in 1925, there were reported 81,000 new cases. How did our municipal-cum-voluntary system cope with this severe onslaught? It provided less than 700 extra beds! Really it looks as though some people would rather fight for voluntarism than against disease. We must get out of

this chaos and mind our own business entirely and adequately.

One of the causes of much sickness and ill-health is smoke, especially the smoke emitted by factory and workshop chimneys. Who worries about smoke? Very few. Under the Public Health Act of 1875 local authorities were given powers to abate smoke nuisances, but as our Councils and our Magisterial Benches were manned mostly by gentlemen whose works emitted smoke, fines were light and prosecutions were rare. In 1927 another Act, the Smoke Abatement Act, was passed, which stiffens the penalties in some cases from £5 to £50, in others from 10s. to 40s., and from 20s. to £5. This seems to indicate a quickened determination to deal with refractory offenders, but no penalty is so severe as the punishment inflicted in the reign of Edward I, when death was the sentence for this abominable crime. Even in 1801 eleven factory owners were fined £100 each for not consuming their own smoke. Recent coal stoppages have made more of us realise the benefits of a smokeless atmosphere, so perhaps we shall decide to mind our own business better in future.

Smoke, of course, is not conducive to clear thinking. It is not surprising, therefore, that our industrial towns possess no powers for advertising the beauties (?) of their architecture, the efficiency of their factories, or their death-rates. Our seaside and inland health and pleasure resorts have, however, exhibited more public spirit and nous. Still, it was not until 1921 that they were able to persuade

Parliament to permit them to expend the proceeds of a penny rate in advertising their attractions, and this sum, it was decreed, must be earned in cash profits by the towns' entertainments.

As a penny rate in these towns brings in at the most £5,000, the absurdity of this grandmotherly restriction is obvious. It would "pay" many resorts to lay out ten times as much. Just as clear is it that it would pay industrial towns to advertise their wares abroad. Wigan, Sheffield, St. Helens, and other towns have applied for permission to Parliament and have been refused. In Canada, South Africa, and in many Continental towns the authorities have power to advertise at their own discretion.

I should mention that there are two exceptions to the ban on advertising by industrial towns. Bristol, under a special Act, is empowered to spend up to £5,000 out of revenue on advertising Avonmouth Docks. Cardiff, too, is allowed to spend a halfpenny rate on publicity for its docks.

Why are we so backward? Because we vote for municipal candidates who do not know how to mind our business.

MUNICIPAL "TRADING"

ABOUT twenty-five years ago there was a sort of boom in municipal housekeeping. Electricity was forging ahead, horse trams were being superseded, motor traction was introduced, and a few muni-

palities were actually building new houses, not merely to replace slum clearances, but because they were required. In some towns there was a terrific struggle between private interests and the municipalities for the control of electricity and trams. In the midst of it, the enemies of municipal house-keeping played what they thought was a master stroke.

It was confidently asserted that municipal "trading" did not pay. A distinguished banker, Lord Avebury, said that municipal trading will "probably" or "certainly" lead to "loss or bad service." Especially in electric lighting. Do you smile?

A Parliamentary inquiry, it was assumed, would provide an array of crushing facts, proving the dire failure of municipal trading all over the country. The inquiry was held. With what result? The enemies of municipal "trading" were hoist with their own pet arguments. The facts disclosed showed that not only did the municipal undertakings provide excellent services, but actually "paid" in the only sense understood by the profiteer. That is, they made "cash profits."

At that date, the total outstanding "debt" or capital invested by boroughs in water, gas, tramway, markets, electricity, baths, harbours, burial grounds, and dwellings was £121,000,000. The income was £13,000,000. The working expenses were £8,250,000. The net profit was nearly £5,000,000. The facts were so demoralising that the inquiry was shut down before its labours were concluded.

To-day, the outstanding capital invested in ten of

the principal services in England and Wales amounts to £600,000,000. One hundred and fourteen of the larger local authorities, including eighty-two County Borough Councils, account for more than £400,000,000 of this. These large local authorities expend an income of £211,000,000, £65,000,000 of which comes from "trading" undertakings.

Does municipal "trading" still pay? Yes. It pays so well that the profiteers never cease plotting to steal the services from the citizens. To-day the cry is, Scrap the municipal trams and let the private enterprise 'buses provide the transport; scrap the municipal electricity undertakings and let private enterprise have full control. The plotters have already engineered a plan for crippling the electricity services and the London County Council Tramways, and if the careless citizen does not wake up and defend his property, some day the enemy will prevail.

As I have already stated, municipal undertakings cannot be judged by the cash profit test of private enterprise. Take water, for example. Even the bitterest opponent of municipal "trading" admits that it is wise to provide a sufficient supply of pure water, although doing so may involve a charge on the rates. "Generally," says the *Municipal Year Book*, "local authorities have not laid themselves out to make a profit from their water undertakings."

When the private enterprise water companies were in possession in London, they made a profit of £1,000,000 a year. Wild cheers from the profiteers. They said, "Look at Glasgow's municipal water undertaking. It makes no profits at all." The silly

citizen took in this claptrap. He did not know that he was paying from two to five times as much for his company water.

The County Boroughs of England and Wales spend £8,000,000 a year on their water services. Their income is £7,000,000. The deficit of £1,000,000 is met by a 2d. rate. On a £20 assessment that will cost the citizen 2s. 4d. a year. Awful, isn't it? But suppose a private company captured his water supply and doubled the price. What would that cost him? From £1 to £3. Does municipal "trading" pay?

"The most striking fact about municipal water, trams, gas, and electricity," says Mr. E. D. Simon, in *A City Council from Within*, "is that there is not a single case in this country of one of these four services reverting to private ownership after being municipalised, whereas the great majority of them were privately owned, and were municipalised later because the local authority was convinced that this was the best and most convenient course." In short, it pays.

The City of Bristol, however, once had an experience of "reverting" to private enterprise in connection with its docks. Or, I should say, "transferring," for the port was originally under the sole control of the corporation. After a time it was induced to sell its rights to private traders. The result was disastrous. They nearly ruined the shipping trade, and the corporation had to buy them out. Under municipal management the trade was doubled in a very short period.

The capital invested in this vast undertaking amounts to £7,500,000. Ten per cent. of all the grain imported into the country, 26 per cent. of the tobacco, and more than one-third of the bananas come into Bristol. Under municipal management the docks have never looked back, and though there is a charge on the rates, the citizens bear it gladly. In 1927 the sum provided from rates was only £60,000, whereas in 1914 the amount was £122,000, a striking testimony to the efficient management of the port during the war and the trade slump since the peace.

Another example of a municipality coming to the rescue of private enterprise is provided by the case of the Manchester Ship Canal. The scheme was bankrupt and would have been dropped in 1899, when the City Council obtained powers to raise £5,000,000. For years this meant one shilling on the rates. To-day the citizens hold stock amounting to £6,750,000 in the concern, part of it representing unpaid interest. In recent years the canal has paid its way, thanks to the long leg-up of municipal assistance.

Why didn't Manchester mind its own business and start the scheme in the first place?

GAS AND WATER SOCIALISM

PEOPLE have sneered at what they call, "Gas and Water Socialism." There is nothing wrong with gas and water Socialism. There is something wrong

with the heads of the people who have failed to learn the lessons taught by the success of gas and water Socialism.

Twenty-five years ago there were 260 municipal gas undertakings. To-day there are 317. From the Board of Trade return (1926-7) I learn that the total capital borrowed is £66,000,000, of which £35,000,000 has already been repaid out of cash profits. The receipts were £25,500,000, and the working expenses £23,000,000. The gross profit was £2,500,000. About 8 per cent. on the capital outstanding. Does municipal gas pay?

From the same return I learn that the number of private companies is 463. Twenty-five years ago there were 459. The total capital and loans invested amount to £113,000,000. The receipts were £49,000,000, and the working expenses £43,750,000. The gross profits were nearly £5,000,000. About 4½ per cent.

Municipal gas is in many instances cheaper than private company gas. Street lighting is done at very low prices, and other advantages are given because the aim is not cash profits. After paying interest on the borrowed capital, and after paying sums into the sinking fund for the repayment of capital, there was a net surplus from 1920-7 of £4,340,000, a portion of which was used in various towns in reduction of rates. For example, in 1926-7: Birmingham, £42,000; Blackpool, £6,000; Bradford, £13,000; Nottingham, £30,000.

Does municipal management pay? In London the citizens have been in the grip of the private

companies from the first, and have never had the sense to attempt to mind their own business. North of the Thames the gas consumers have been milked of millions of pounds simply because Parliament gave the company power to impose high charges. Even if company gas is the same price as municipal gas, consumers are paying through the nose, because the surplus of municipal undertakings is used to pay off the capital instead of going into profiteering pockets. In time the undertakings will be free of debt, and the services can be still further cheapened.

Now look at Manchester. Manchester kicked out the would-be profiteers before they got their foot in. This was about a hundred years ago when gas cost 30s. 1,000ft. The Police Commissioners had started street lighting in 1808, and twenty years later the Manchester Imperial Joint Stock Oil Gas Company formed itself in order to capture the coming industry. The Police Commissioners thought not, and induced Parliament to endorse their view that gas works would secure their objects better if they were "conducted under effective public control by a public body than by any private association founded solely for private gain."

To-day Manchester municipal gas capital amounts to £5,000,000. In 1927 its gross profit was over £200,000, but it had no surplus for the rates. In fact, there was a deficit, due, no doubt, to high coal costs. The enemy of municipal "trading" might cite Manchester gas as a horrible example of the failure of municipal enterprise, but what a shock he would get if he learned the full facts.

In the first place, the Manchester gas undertaking decided in 1921 that it would not in future contribute any surplus to the rates, but use the money for the development of the service. Before that date, what was its record in this respect? In *How Manchester is Managed*, Mr. Matthew Anderson tells the story. The Gas Committee took over the undertaking from the Police Commissioners in 1844, and from that date until 1921, the gas department had paid over to other departments for various city purposes the huge sum of £3,441,435. Does municipal management pay?

All these years the sister city of Liverpool had been in the hands of a private company, paying more for its gas, and shovelling the profits into the pockets of people who did not use them to establish a better water supply, or improve the streets, or for any other communal purpose. In one year, Manchester gas consumers saved on the cost of their gas over £150,000 by not buying it at Liverpool prices. Does municipal management pay?

It is often charged against municipal management that the incentive of profit being absent, the undertakings must necessarily be less efficient, and that their conductors are prone to be satisfied with jogging along in the old ruts. Nothing could be farther from the truth.

The Manchester gas department, for example, has always been in the van of progress, "treading on the heels of invention and research all the time," as Mr. Anderson puts it. Its latest development was the reconstruction of the Bradford Road gasworks

at a cost of £900,000. Here every bit of the plant is the best the inventor and the scientist could devise, and the up-to-date methods of carbonisation are being closely watched by other manufacturers.

Another example of the efficient management of the Manchester municipal gas works is vividly shown in its receipts from the by-products of gas manufacture. In 1927 the coke, tar, and sulphate of ammonia disposed of yielded 1s. 4d. per 1,000 cubic feet of gas sold, thus cheapening the cost to the consumer by that amount.

During recent years there has been a remarkable increase in the use of town gas for industrial purposes. The Birmingham municipal gas department has taken a leading place in this development. In 1911 only 5 per cent. of the gas sold was for industrial uses, but in 1926 the proportion had risen to nearly 20 per cent., and over 1,000 trades are dependent on Birmingham municipal gas for carrying on their multifarious heating operations in factory and workshop.

Can we mind our own business? We can. Yet we have allowed 463 private gas companies to dig themselves in. Who is responsible? The careless citizen.

MUNICIPAL LIGHT AND POWER

THE reader may remember that municipalities were warned especially against the risks and dangers of establishing electric undertakings. "Let there be no

municipal light " was the fiat of the enemies of municipal housekeeping. Fifty years ago the industry was new and untried, and in the early experiments some municipalities made cash losses. How shameful to let these be borne by the poor ratepayers when profiteers were willing to carry the burden.

Fortunately the municipalities hung on, and although their activities were deliberately hampered and handicapped by the friends of the profiteers in Parliament, the municipal undertakings to-day are the envy of the electrical world.

Let us look at it. The first fact that strikes us is that of the total of 560 electric undertakings in the country, 335 are municipal.

The next is that the municipal undertakings produce 66 per cent. of the total output. The most astonishing fact is that the municipal undertakings make nearly as large, and in some years higher cash profits than the private companies.

Does municipal management pay?

Up to 1925 the municipal undertakings had borrowed capital to the amount of £114,000,000. Of this £44,000,000 had been repaid out of cash profits. The revenue was £25,500,000. The working expenses were nearly £15,000,000. The gross surplus was £11,000,000. Of this gross surplus, 33 per cent. was used for payment of interest on the borrowed capital, 38 per cent. for repayment of capital, 9 per cent. for reserves, 11 per cent. for new capital expenditure, and nearly 7 per cent., a sum of £751,000, for reduction of rates. What do you think now of the awful warning against loss and bad service?

I wish the reader to take particular note of the fact that nearly three-quarters of the gross surplus, 71½ per cent., is used for interest and repayment of debt, and that so far £44,000,000 of debt has been repaid. When the whole debt has been paid off the £8,000,000 so expended will be available for still further cheapening the service.

Now let us glance at the superior private enterprise undertakings, and please remember that they have had much greater freedom of enterprise than the municipal undertakings. They have not been restricted to municipal areas, and they have been at liberty to establish themselves where they thought the prospects of success were brightest. The pick of the basket has been their policy.

The total capital of the private electricity companies was £68,750,000. The revenue was £15,250,000. The working expenses were £8,500,000, and the gross surplus was £7,500,000. Of this gross surplus 53 per cent. was used for paying dividends of 5½ and 9¼ per cent. to the preference and ordinary shareholders, 42 per cent. for depreciation funds, and the balance to appropriation accounts.

The gross surplus was a percentage on the capital of 10·1. In the municipal undertakings the percentage was 8·4. The year before, the figures were municipal 10·4, private company 9·7.

With their incentive of gain, their greater freedom, and their superior gifts of business management, the private companies ought to have knocked the municipal undertakings into a cocked hat. So they have, and the feather is in the municipal hat. Look at the

records. Which of the two classes of undertaking supply the cheapest current?

Only 10 per cent. of the private companies supply current for domestic use at less than 5d. per unit against 30 per cent. of the municipal undertakings. Only 40 per cent. of the companies supply current between 5d. and 8d. against 60 per cent. of the municipal. When you come to the highest prices the companies win hands down. Only 10 per cent. of the municipal undertakings charge more than 8d. per unit, whereas 50 per cent. of the companies do.

If you go into the City of London you will hear above the clang and roar of the traffic the wailing and groaning of human beings in distress. What is the matter with them? They are consumers of electric light and power, and they buy current from private companies. Taking six of the largest companies and comparing them with six of the largest municipal undertakings in London, the *Electrical Times* showed that the average price of the companies was 3·07d. per unit, while the average price of the municipal current was 2·16d. This means that where the consumer of municipal current pays £100, the consumer of private company current pays more than £140. Does municipal management pay?

In Battersea, current costs nearly 1 $\frac{3}{4}$ d. In Stepney slightly more than 1 $\frac{1}{2}$ d. In Poplar it cost exactly 1 $\frac{1}{2}$ d. per unit. These are municipal supplies, and the boroughs are dominated by wild, reckless, and unbusinesslike Labour Councillors. In Chelsea current is more than 4 $\frac{3}{4}$ d., and in Kensington it is 3 $\frac{1}{2}$ d. per unit. These are private company

supplies, and the Councils are dominated by far-seeing, benevolent, business men, calling themselves Municipal "Reformers"! They do not believe in the citizens minding their own business. Battersea is divided from Chelsea by the Thames. On one side, the municipal side, you pay £100 for current. On the other side, the private company side, you pay £270 for the same quantity. Does municipal management pay?

Yes, municipal management pays so well that the owners of the private companies, who thrive on the losses of the consumer, have persuaded Parliament to allow them to dig themselves in for another 40 or 50 years, with guaranteed profits on a princely scale, and at the same time the municipal services are to be still further handicapped by having their current generating activities transferred to giant power companies, subsidised by public money. As a result of these plots we are promised cheaper current. Do you think we shall get it? "The whole thing," wrote Mr. R. Moritz in the *Evening Standard*, is one of the biggest delusions ever foisted upon a credulous public. The House of Commons has been hoodwinked by the electricity companies."

They were minding their own business. Why do we not mind ours more thoroughly?

A TALE OF TRAMWAYS

IN 1870 the wise men of Westminster passed an Act which gave municipalities permission to *own* tram-

way undertakings. Not permission to work them. Simply to own them. The working, it was decreed, must be left to private enterprise. What was the result? The services were frequently inefficient and dear, and the public kicked—a little. In 1882 Huddersfield obtained permission to work its tramways, and by 1903, of the 162 tramways owned by municipalities, 102 were also worked by them.

The Glasgow tramways, from 1871 to 1894, were leased to a private company. The day after the lease expired the Corporation placed on the streets an entirely new service of cars—cleaner, handsomer, and more comfortable in every way than their predecessors. Their horses were new and untrained, their staff was bigger, and the old company flooded the routes with competitive 'buses. Notwithstanding these handicaps, the Corporation introduced halfpenny fares, gave longer rides for a penny, raised the wages and reduced the hours of the men, refused to take money for advertisements, and at the end of the year (eleven months) they had made a net profit of £24,000 for the Common Good Fund. Does municipal management pay?

To-day the revenue of the Glasgow trams amounts to £2,500,000 a year. The liabilities on the undertaking in May 1927 were over £1,250,000, but the assets were £7,500,000. A surplus of £6,000,000. This remarkable record has been achieved despite the difficulties of the war years and after. Some of the fares are actually cheaper than pre-war values, and wages are 100 per cent. above the 1914 level.

A similar story could be told of other towns—

Liverpool, Manchester, Birmingham, London or Leeds. It was due to the action of a Leeds Member of Parliament that the House of Commons was induced to grant working powers to municipal tramway undertakings. Leeds citizens have reason to be thankful for the ensuing prosperity of their tramway system. Since its establishment 30 years ago it has contributed to the rates out of cash profit the huge sum of £1,731,000. In addition, it has spent £1,500,000 on the upkeep of roads, the greater portion of which would otherwise have been a burden on the ratepayers. Does municipal management pay?

The last return issued (1927) shows that there are now 233 tramway undertakings in Great Britain, 167 owned by municipalities and 66 by private companies. The total capital of the municipal undertakings was nearly £83,000,000, of which £44,600,000 has been redeemed, leaving a net capital liability of £38,000,000. The gross receipts were £23,600,000, the working expenses £18,600,000. The gross profits were £5,200,000, or about 13 $\frac{2}{3}$ per cent. on the capital. The working expenses amounted to 78 $\frac{1}{4}$ per cent. of the gross receipts. The receipts per car mile run were 17d., and the gross working expenses 13 $\frac{1}{3}$ d. The passengers carried numbered over 4,000,000,000.

The total paid-up capital of the companies was £21,000,000, of which only £1,296,000 has been redeemed, leaving a net capital liability of nearly £19,800,000. The gross receipts were £3,900,000, the working expenses over £3,250,000. The gross profits were £611,000, or about 3 per cent. on the capital.

The working expenses amounted to $84\frac{1}{2}$ per cent. of the gross receipts. The receipts per car mile were 14.46d., and the gross working expenses 12.74. The passengers carried were 565,000,000. Does municipal management pay? Ask the companies.

The enemies of municipal "trading" are crying, "Scrap the trams," more especially in London. During the last four years the L.C.C. trams have shown a cash loss, much to the jubilation of these profiteering plotters. On paper the cash losses from 1923-7 amounted to £828,000. Is this apparently large sum anything to worry about unduly? Let us see.

Assuming no decrease in the number of passengers one-tenth of a penny extra on the fares would bring in £282,000. Thus three-tenths of a penny, a little more than a farthing, would bring in £846,000, and wipe out the deficit. At present passengers have many advantages. By taking a shilling ticket they may travel on one day over the whole system of 165 miles. Last year 16,500,000 did. Then, between the hours of 10 and 4, daytime, passengers may travel the whole of one route for 2d. Forty per cent. of the passengers pay only penny fares. There are cheap workmen's fares.

Again, in the accounts for any one year the full cost of repairs to the permanent way and renewals of cars and equipment are charged, although cars have a longer life than a year, and the upkeep of permanent way ought to be to some degree a charge on the general rates. Thus Mr. J. Beckett, F.S.A.A., secretary, Municipal Tramways and Transport Associa-

tion, calculates that from the alleged loss of £275,000 in 1926-7, there ought fairly to be deducted on this account £250,000, which would bring the real loss down to £24,500, a sum not worth talking about. You can understand why the profiteers make such a song about this cash loss when you realise that a penny increase on the fares would bring in nearly £3,000,000 a year. The profiteers are after the chance to do that. Mr. C. W. Matthews, Chairman of the Highways Committee of the L.C.C., stated in November 1928 that if the fares paid by passengers on the private enterprise 'buses on the tram routes were charged to L.C.C. tram users, the increased cost to the tram users would be £1,000,000 a year.

The so-called Municipal "Reformers" on the London County Council brazenly declared themselves in favour of selling, or leasing, London's tramways, but even the careless citizens of London showed that they would not stand this. Recently, however, the London Traffic Combine, in conjunction with the "Reformers" majority on the L.C.C., promoted Bills in Parliament for co-ordinating the traffic systems under one management. This plan, as Mr. Herbert Morrison pointed out, would take from the L.C.C. the effective control of their tramway system. Thus what the profiteers have failed to accomplish by open methods they may succeed in doing by this underground scheme. Unless—London citizens decide to mind their own business.

Scrap the trams and let the company 'buses carry us! But if we *must* scrap the trams, why cannot

MIND YOUR OWN BUSINESS

in the 'buses ourselves? We are doing so, so long as Parliament will permit. In 1927 there were twenty-one municipal motor 'bus undertakings, which made cash profits of £129,000. Give us the means, and we can mind our own business in any industry.

HIDDEN PROFITS

The benefits of municipal housekeeping, as I have pointed out, cannot be estimated always in terms of cash profit. A trading service showing a cash loss may in reality be as profitable as another showing cash profits. Should municipal trading undertakings make cash profits? Some supporters of municipalisation say, no. They argue that profits on a gas undertaking, used to reduce the general rate, are a robbery of the gas consumers. On the other hand, it is argued that if the gas consumers get a cheap and efficient service, it is only fair that the whole of the ratepayers should share in any benefit, as the undertaking is a communal property. To me myself this is a matter for equitable adjustment according to local circumstances.

Opponents of municipalisation are furious when cash profits are shown. They, too, assert that no cash should be made. They are just as furious when cash losses are shown, or small profits. They look at the paltry profits. . . . Or, look at the losses. . . . Cash results are their only test of success. . . . This method may be all right for

private enterprise, but you cannot judge the value of a municipal undertaking unless you take into consideration the very different principle which rules municipal housekeeping. This principle, the welfare of the community, compels you to take notice of facts which are hidden behind the cash balance sheets.

Let me give an illustration. Suppose a private enterprise tramway company, with a capital of £500,000, made a profit of 5 per cent. The amount would be £25,000. Now, suppose a municipal tramway service with a "debt" (or capital) of £500,000 also made a "surplus" of £25,000. . . . Is it profit? . . . There is no dividend for the rate-payers. What is done with the surplus? . . . In the first place £15,000 is paid for interest on the capital borrowed. In the second place £10,000 is paid into the Sinking Fund, a fund which the municipal undertaking is compelled by law to accumulate in order to repay the capital in a term of years.

The opponent of municipal trading says, look at private enterprise. It pays 5 per cent. . . . Look at municipal trams. They have no profit at all. . . . What is the truth? The truth is that the municipal undertaking has made as much profit as the private company, and has used it to better purpose. For the sinking fund will in time wipe out the "debt," and the citizens will then own an undertaking free of liabilities, and capable of providing a cheaper service, or of showing still higher cash profits.

Cash profits are not the only test. Even when cash profits are shown by a municipal service, there

are nearly always other profits, hidden profits, and these should be remembered. . . . The London County Council Tramway Service has always been the butt of ignorant or inimical critics. Twenty-five years ago the Council leased one section of tramways to a private company, at a rent. The company made profits. On the other section, worked by the Council, it was declared there were no profits. What were the facts?

From 1899 to 1903 the trams worked by the Council made cash profits of £72,000, after paying interest and sinking fund charges, £180,000. Was this all? . . . No. There were hidden profits. . . . For example, £120,000 paid in extra wages and holidays to employees. Then the lower fares charged on the Council's routes saved the passengers £400,000. . . . Thus there was a total real profit of £772,000, which under private enterprise would have gone into the pockets of a few shareholders. . . . Does municipal management pay?

To-day the same false statements are broadcast. . . . For the year ended March, 1928, the estimated surplus of the L.C.C. trams is £500,000. If the trams belonged to a private company, this surplus, after making provision for the reserve fund, would be distributed as dividends. The company would boast of its profits. . . . But the London County Council has to pay, in interest and sinking fund charges, nearly £750,000 . . . so that the accounts will show a cash loss of £250,000. Is this a real loss?

Let us first take into account some of the hidden profits. The L.C.C. trams carry about 1,000,000,000

passengers in a year. Now, if there were no L.C.C. trams it is certain that the private 'bus and tram companies would get at least a farthing extra per passenger. What would that mean? . . . It would mean £1,000,000 a year to the L.C.C. tram passengers alone. And as the private companies are already carrying nearly twice as many passengers as the L.C.C. trams, that would mean another £2,000,000 extra for them. . . . Then, there are the suburban railway passengers. . . .

In addition, the L.C.C. trams pay for road maintenance about £160,000 a year, which would otherwise be a burden on the rates. They pay out of revenue for renewals, charges which sometimes ought to be spread over a number of years, and they pay also towards the cost of street widenings, even though such widenings are necessitated by motor 'bus competition! . . . And all the time the service is paying off the borrowed capital (£8,000,000 already paid), so that in a few more years the undertaking will be free from liabilities. . . . If you reckon up the hidden profits, it is obvious that the L.C.C. trams are an exceedingly profitable enterprise for the community.

The citizen who has once grasped the true principle of municipal housekeeping, and has learned how to judge the value of municipal undertakings will never more be misled by the wild and untrue attacks of the profiteers. Ask for the hidden profits, and see that you get them. . . . You will find them in every branch of municipal housekeeping.

It is astonishing that the people who are paying

through the nose for private enterprise services are not more wide awake to the advantages of municipal enterprise. Think, for example, of the poor Londoners who use electricity for light and power. In 1925 they bought from the private companies 489,500,000 units. They paid £9 for a supply which, if purchased from the municipal electricity undertakings, would have cost them £7, or less. . . . In all, they paid £877,000 more than they need have done . . . had they been wise enough to mind their own business.

THE IMPORTANCE OF MUNICIPAL MARKETS

ALTHOUGH there are hundreds of markets in the country, many of which have existed from the beginnings of civilisation, the information available about them is exceedingly scanty. This deficiency will, however, shortly be remedied. The Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries has undertaken a survey of the markets of England and Wales, and has already published an interesting general survey, to be followed by detailed reports.

Markets, like Topsy, appear to have "growned." They sprang up spontaneously at a port, a crossroad, or around the walls of a castle or monastery. Very early in their development the Crown assumed the right of management. Franchises were granted by Royal Charter, sometimes to lords of the manor, in other cases to ecclesiastical bodies or municipal corporations. From 1199 to 1483 over 2,800 grants

of markets were made by the Crown. In the period from 1700 to 1846 the number of grants was 93.

In recent times market rights have been usually derived from Acts of Parliament. The Local Government Act of 1858 conferred additional powers on local authorities, many of which have acquired private rights by gift, at a nominal rent, or, in some cases, by buying out the owners at a huge figure.

An example of the last kind may be quoted from the experience of Manchester. When the De La Warrs were lords of the Manor it was said that one of them tried to poison his uncle so that the market tolls might flow into his own pocket. When he did come into possession, he sold his rights to an Alderman of London, for the sum of £3,500. The Alderman's family held them from 1596 to 1845, when the Corporation agreed to acquire them for £200,000 in annual instalments. When the final instalment was paid in 1894, £376,072 had been paid by the Corporation in principal and interest.

At present there are in England and Wales 1,345 separate markets for the sale of agricultural supplies. Of these 859 are under private ownership and 486 under public ownership. The total number of livestock markets is 961, of which 224 are publicly controlled. . . . Wholesale produce markets are generally found in towns with a population of 100,000 and over, and with few exceptions are owned by the local authority.

The lord of the manor used to set up markets in whatever part of the area he pleased, and he did not always consider the general convenience of

the citizens. In Manchester, for example, market stalls were sprinkled all over the city, and the first aim of the Corporation was to centralise them where they could function cleanly and efficiently. This object has been achieved, and to-day the municipal markets of Manchester are in the van of progress.

There are three wholesale markets—fruit and vegetable, fish, and meat. The Smithfield (Manchester) fruit and vegetable market has over 27,000 square yards under glass, and supplies a population of 4,500,000 people within a radius of twenty-five miles. It is the largest in the country, and Covent Garden has to hide its diminished head behind a box of Beecham's Pills. . . . The fish market is next to Billingsgate in size, but claims first place in efficiency. Nearly 1,000 tons of fish are dealt with every week. In the meat market, adjoining the city abattoirs, or slaughter-houses, 1,000 animals are killed daily, and as many are imported from abroad. There are still private slaughter-houses, but they account for only 8 per cent. of the meat killed. The system of food inspection is rigid, and the staff employed is the largest in the country.

In comparison with this example of efficient municipal management it is depressing to turn to the scandal of London's markets, which have been periodically investigated and condemned by commissions and committees for the last half-century. Covent Garden, for instance, has become a national joke. "The buildings are obsolete, inconvenient, and badly lighted," reported a Departmental Committee. "The internal conditions add greatly to

the cost of handling produce." Some of the users use another adjective.

The markets controlled by the London City Corporation—Billingsgate, Smithfield, and the rest—are likewise examples of how not to mind your own business. Recently, however, the City Fathers have endeavoured to redeem their bad record somewhat. Spitalfields, the fruit and vegetable market, has been extended from an area of two and a half acres to eight acres. At a cost of £2,000,000 the market is to be improved out of all knowledge, with broad avenues, extensive accommodation for stalls, large new auction rooms, warehouses, and offices. The inaugural improvements were opened by Her Majesty the Queen in November last. Nevertheless, the general inadequacy and inefficiency of the markets involve for the people of London a terrific burden in high prices, not to mention the effects on health. The London County Council's only effort to cope with this problem is to ask the President of the Board of Trade to ask the market owners to be good enough to adapt the markets to modern needs. What is wanted is the transfer of market control to the L.C.C., so that the citizens could fully exercise their right to mind their own business in this department.

Does municipal management pay? . . . You cannot judge this by looking only at the cash account. The main object of conducting municipal markets is to ensure a supply of clean and pure food at convenient centres and to prevent cruelty to animals. Incidentally it happens to be the fact that most

municipal markets show cash profits, which in many cases are used to reduce the rates. Speaking of the wholesale markets, the *General Review* remarks that "they are a great convenience to the retail trade in that they enable the quality and price of large supplies of a wide range of commodities to be quickly compared and a selection made to the best advantage. They help to steady prices. They also help to ensure that prices are a reasonably fair reflection of the relation of supply and demand." Thus they keep down profiteering.

In many places there is insufficient market accommodation, and unauthorised persons are seizing the opportunity to fill the gap. If the careless citizen were less careless this would not happen, for he would see that in this important sphere of life it is the Council's duty to mind their own business.

THE BEGINNING OF MUNICIPAL BANKING

BANKING, to many people, is a deep and dark mystery. I mean the business of banking. This is hardly surprising when with bankers themselves the question how money gets into banks is still a much-debated problem. On the other hand, there are bankers who say that banking is quite a simple business, and that it consists solely in lending the deposits of one set of customers to another set. If this is the fact, is it not astonishing that we, as citizens, have not established municipal banks all over the country?

In fact, there is only one authorised municipal bank in existence—the Birmingham Municipal Bank. It began in 1916, during the war. Mr. Neville Chamberlain was Lord Mayor at the time, and he induced the Council to apply for powers. Parliament, even in war time, when money was so badly needed, looked askance at this proposal to set up a competitor with the private banks. The Bill was passed, but very much mutilated. Its restrictions were designed to kill the idea. Nevertheless, Birmingham went ahead.

The result was as the banking fraternity desired. The municipal bank made a loss. Naturally, for the bank allowed its depositors $3\frac{1}{2}$ per cent. interest and only received $3\frac{1}{2}$ per cent. on its funds deposited with the Treasury. There was nothing left for working expenses. Loud cheers from the enemies of municipal "trading."

In 1919, Birmingham tried again, and slipped a Bill through Parliament. The new powers included permission for the Corporation to engage in savings bank, deposit, and house purchase business, and cut out the restrictions of the first Act. From that time to date the bank has made steady progress, and its benefits to Birmingham have been widely acknowledged. Other municipalities have desired to follow in the footsteps of the pioneer, but the bankers have got the wind up, and Parliament, with a majority who do not wish the people to mind their own business, has said nay.

Of course, the Birmingham Municipal Bank is not permitted to engage in all the activities open to the

ordinary bank. It does not discount commercial bills, or grant credit to traders and investors. Even so, its success has been remarkable. It is a real example of municipal housekeeping. As Mr. Neville Chamberlain said: "The secret of the success lies in the fact that it is associated with our municipal system. . . . You may call it Socialism if you like. I have never been frightened by a name. I do not care whether it is Socialism or not so long as it is a good thing. It would be a good thing for this country if it were further extended."

At March 31, 1928, the total credits due to depositors amounted to £9,069,841, an increase of more than £1,000,000 for the year. After all expenses had been met, there was a surplus which was transferred to reserves which now amount to £122,842. Does municipal management pay? The total number of depositors was 254,443, and the average holding was £35. During the year £398,099 was advanced on house purchasing mortgages, and since the bank started 7,869 mortgages have been financed, the total advances being £2,630,529.

The Birmingham Municipal Bank encourages thrift by loaning "home safes." Five years ago 2,469 of these were in use. Last year the number had increased to 28,265 an addition of 9,882 for the year. School savings banks deposited £44,383. Another service rendered by the bank to its depositors is the transfer of sums to the Corporation for gas, water, and electricity debts, thus saving all the bother of withdrawals and pay-

ments to the three departments. In 1928, 114,738 such accounts were dealt with, and it is intended to make similar arrangements in the near future for the payment of rates. As more than 25 per cent. of the population are depositors at the bank's forty-eight branches, this will add greatly to the convenience and economy of the City's financial organisation.

If you study the advertisements in the newspapers you may have noticed one about the great advantage of investing in Corporation stocks. From this you would learn that municipal securities have more gilt on their edges than any others, even Government securities. Municipalities never go bankrupt, and no case is known of one repudiating its debts. Yet municipalities have often to go into the open money market when they want to borrow. . . . Why don't they borrow the money of their own citizens, and so get it cheaper? They do, or rather *it* does—at Birmingham, where they have learned to mind a little bit of their own banking business.

In 1928, the Birmingham Municipal Bank (the property of the citizens) lent to the Birmingham Corporation (the whole body of citizens) the sum of six and a half million pounds, at $\frac{1}{2}$ per cent. lower rate of interest than the Corporation paid to the private banks for other loans. This saved the Corporation £35,000, equivalent to 1 $\frac{1}{2}$ d. in the £ on the City rates. Does municipal banking pay? The answer is so obviously in the affirmative that several other progressive Corporations desired to follow in Birmingham's footsteps. Whereupon the

Government appointed a Treasury Committee under Lord Bradbury to investigate the question. This Committee reported against an extension of municipal banking facilities, on totally inadequate grounds, and grounds which had been cut from under their feet by Birmingham's experience. But what other decision could have been expected? The careless citizen has got the Government he deserves.

Look at what the canny Scots have done. Kirkintilloch, a burgh with 12,000 people, could not hope to get an Act of Parliament. So Mr. T. Johnston, M.P., with a few other conspirators, formed a limited liability company. The Kirkintilloch Municipal Bank Limited, shares 1s., only to be held by Councillors. No profit nor dividend. They pay 3 per cent., $\frac{1}{2}$ per cent. more than the Post Office, and lend their funds to the Council at cost price, thus saving the citizens about 2 per cent. on loans, which means a reduction of rates of 2d. in the £. Does Scottish guile and municipal management pay?

Motherwell, Peebles, Irvine, and other small towns have followed this example, and the success of all of them is beyond peradventure. Kirkintilloch in 1926 had £31,910 in deposits, and Motherwell £30,000.

What is the moral of these experiments? Is it not plain enough? Banking is no mystery, and given the opportunity the municipalities could engage with success in all its ramifications, locally, at any rate. The beauty of banking is that you don't need any capital to start with, if you are a government or a municipality, for banking at bottom is credit, or confidence, and where is there more credit or con-

fidence than in our municipalities? Nowhere. Australia opened a State Bank without capital, and makes nearly two millions a year profit.

Do you not think it time we all began to mind our own banking business?

DIRECT LABOUR

THREE or four years ago I was present at a ratepayers' meeting in connection with the housing problem. The question was asked, "Can the houses needed be built by the Council by direct labour?" Direct labour? What was that? A Councillor got up and asserted that it had never been done, and he did not think it could be done. (He was a builder.) Another speaker had read about two or three experiments, but could give no details. General impression—that the building of small houses was quite beyond the competence of a Council. Now, at this date, nearly one hundred municipalities have built houses by direct labour, and the astonishing thing about this number is not its immensity, but its smallness. People have discussed the building of houses by direct labour as if the task were much too difficult and gigantic for the brains and the resources of the local authorities. Why? Because they are entirely ignorant of the enormous amount of work done by the municipalities already by direct labour, including building, engineering, constructional, and manufacturing activities. And, as usual, to the profit of the ratepayers.

In the good old times nearly all the work of municipalities was done by contractors. That is to say, it was farmed out to private enterprise. With what result? The ratepayers were fleeced by the incorruptible champions of private enterprise so abominably that in self-defence they had to adopt direct labour. In Liverpool forty years ago, "they had such a cruel experience of doing the work of sewerage by contractors that they gave it up." The contractors—honest men—after contracting to put in two courses of brickwork, put in one only, except at points where the inspectors happened to be looking.

Similar scamping went on everywhere—Glasgow, Manchester, Nottingham, Bristol, Cardiff, London. So the wide-awake municipalities more and more resolved to mind their own business. Some of them established works departments, others kept a staff of mechanics and artisans in regular employment. Even so municipally backward an area as London fell into line after the County Council was created, and in 1892 set up a works department which lived for fourteen years, and saved the citizens thousands of pounds. Then the friends of the contractors were swept into power by the citizens who do not vote, and the department was abolished.

It is comic to think of the timid and ignorant citizen who doubts whether his Council is capable of building one hundred small dwellings, and then to turn to the census of production statistics recently published in the *Board of Trade Journal*. The return deals with certain productive undertakings

of local authorities, and gives particulars of the work done and goods made by these undertakings by direct labour. The undertakings include gas-works, electricity works, tramways and 'buses, harbours, docks, sea walls, rivers and canals, parks, drainage, highways and bridges, roads, streets, sewers, and various minor undertakings

The figures relate to the year 1924, and they are compared with those of the previous census of 1907. . . . In 1907 the total value of the goods made and work done by these undertakings was £47,500,000. In 1924, the total value was £133,500,000. Nearly three times greater, but allowing for the difference in the value of money, perhaps actually twice as great. Does municipal management pay?

• In 1907 the average number of persons directly employed was—Operative staff, 199,661, salaried staff, 16,523. Total, 216,184. In 1924, operative staff, 254,626; salaried staff, 23,992. Total, 278,618. The average net output per person employed was in 1907 £126. In 1924, £244. These totals by no means represent the whole of the direct labour activities of our municipalities, no details being given of such undertakings as scavenging, house refuse collection and disposal, policing of parks, grave digging, and running tramcars. Nevertheless, they are sufficiently comprehensive and striking to dispel the delusion that local authorities are incapable of building small houses. If they had built the whole of the million houses erected since the Armistice it would have meant merely doubling the amount of direct labour they undertake year by year.

Moreover, we should have got cheaper houses by £20,000,000 to £30,000,000 on the municipally built houses alone. In fact, less than 30,000 municipal houses have been built by direct labour, but many of these schemes provide another stunning testimonial to the common sense of minding our own business. It must be remembered that the Councils generally are not organised or equipped for dealing with housing, and it is not surprising that in some instances they have been outbid in their estimates by the big contractors controlling large plants.

In 1920 Sir Alfred Mond (now Lord Melchett) was at the Office of Works, which undertook housing schemes for local authorities in twenty areas. The number of houses was 4,594. Does municipal management pay? Or, in this case, Government management? Ask Sir Alfred. "In nearly every case," he said, "our price has been about £200 less per house than a contractor's price." Again: "My staff is extraordinarily overworked, and its achievement in carrying out building schemes to the value of £2,000,000, with overhead charges of about 1½ per cent., would be very difficult to beat in any industrial establishment that I have ever seen." In some cases the saving was £300 up to £600 per house.

The experience of many Councils who have built by direct labour is one of large savings achieved. Go to Manchester. On one side of a street there are houses built by contractors for £847. Opposite, houses built by the City Council by direct labour for £620. Total saving, £17,480. At Colne the saving

on parlour houses was £508; on non-parlour £461. At Clitheroe £496 and £110.

On its Drumoyne Estate of 318 houses Glasgow saved £49,000, or £154 per house, and the workmanship was better than that of similar houses built by contractors. Norwich on twenty-four houses saved £35 each, Durham £15 10s., Bermondsey £70 per house, and so on *ad lib.* Does municipal management pay?

The Councils who employ contractors expend huge sums in "watching" that they don't prey on the ratepayers. Manchester spent £200,000 in a year. London County Council spends £100,000 a year. Why do we do such ridiculous things? Why don't we mind our own business—all along the line?

MUNICIPAL WAGES AND CONDITIONS

WE are living in hard times, but I do not think any of the workers employed by our municipalities would prefer the good old times of their fathers, when private enterprise ruled both in its own especial sphere and in the sphere of municipal housekeeping. The wages and conditions in some of the undertakings were shocking, and it was a great stride forward when hundreds of Councils were persuaded to adopt the policy of the London County Council, to wit, that the rates of wages and hours of labour shall be those recognised by and in practice obtained by associations of employers and Trade Unions of workmen.

For some classes of workers, municipalisation brought benefits which to-day seem almost incredible. Take, for example, transport workers. London 'busmen used to work sixteen hours a day for a seven-day week. There were no holidays; no free uniforms. The hours were inclusive of meal-times, which consisted of about twenty minutes in a day, snatched while the men were in charge of their 'buses. Under the private tramway company the conditions were nearly as bad.

When the L.C.C. took over the trams the men were paid as much for sixty hours as previously they had earned in eighty-four hours. They worked ten hours a day. They got one day's holiday in seven.

The conditions in Glasgow were dreadful. The hours of labour averaged fourteen a day, and the wages were 19s. a week, but on this meagre sum the men had to look "respectable." The married could not work the miracle always, and in consequence some of them were hauled before the magistrates for being indecently clothed. Fines for trivial offences were numerous, and the men had to deposit £2 before they could be engaged as a guarantee against dishonesty.

When the Glasgow Corporation took over the system, wages were increased to 24s. a week, rising to 27s. in two years, and free uniforms were supplied.

Similar advantages were obtained in other towns. In Sheffield, where the private company had paid £100 in wages, the corporation paid £165 for the same amount of work. In Bolton the rise was from

£100 to £137. In Wallasey from £100 to £185. In Northampton from £100 to £120. It must have been a shock for those who got the 85 per cent. advance, but I imagine they needed it, and soon got used to it.

To-day wages and conditions for municipal employees are for the most part arranged by joint discussion in the Whitley Councils, about 80 per cent. of the workers being organised. The following comparison of rates in 1914 and 1927 will show how Trade Unionism and municipalisation together have succeeded in improving conditions in a difficult period.

	1914.			1927.		
	<i>Per week.</i>			<i>Per week.</i>		
	<i>Hrs.</i>	<i>Wages.</i>		<i>Hrs.</i>	<i>Wages.</i>	
Gas	55	28s. ..		47½	56s.	
Electric	55	29s. ..		47½	60s.	
Water	55	24s. ..		47½	50s.	
Non-trading..	54	23s. ..		47½	47s.	

The above rates are for the provinces, the London rates being 10 per cent. higher, except in the case of trams.

In the case of tramway employees, substantial improvements have been effected since 1914. Prior to 1918, wages and conditions were settled by local negotiation. In 1919, the National Joint Industrial Council was formed representing practically the whole industry. In the same year the first national conditions agreement was made. Under this, hours previously ranging from 54 to 60 and more were reduced to 48—in some grades 47—and conditions which had varied considerably were made uniform.

The National Council also created a tribunal for dealing with matters in disagreement, and in 1924 the Trade Union application for certain changes was submitted to it. In its decision the Tribunal decreed that there should be six wage groups, with increases in many instances, and added payment for permanent night work. The sliding scale which had been in operation was abolished, and wages were stabilised. The maximum rate for motormen in Group I is 63s. 6d., and for conductors, 59s. 6d. In Group VI the maximum rates are : motormen, 53s. 6d. ; conductors, 49s. 6d.

During the last few years several Councils, including Woolwich, Poplar, Bethnal Green, and Shoreditch have paid higher rates than those fixed by the joint industrial councils on the ground that the minima fixed were not sufficient recompense for the work, and did not provide a reasonable standard of life. The extra payments were contested by the District Auditors, and litigation followed. The House of Lords upheld the decisions of the auditors, and various Councillors were surcharged with the over-payments.

Finally, the Tory Government passed an Act of Parliament, which imposes most onerous conditions on the municipal Councils with respect to their expenditure. Members surcharged with the sum of £500 are to be disqualified from serving on any local authority for five years. This measure is designed to discourage Councillors from raising wages beyond the figure considered " reasonable " by the District Auditors, who are ap-

pointed by the Minister of Health, and to prevent "unreasonable" expenditure of any kind.

This arrogant interference of an official who is responsible neither to the Ministry of Health nor to Parliament for his decisions on "reasonability" is the result of not minding our own business efficiently and fully. The principles of local self-government have hitherto included the right of the local representatives to settle such matters at their own discretion, subject to the endorsement of the electors at the periodical elections. The Government had no mandate to introduce this reactionary legislation, which is a piece of Fascism all democrats will resent.

It has always been the ideal of whole-hearted supporters of the principle of municipal housekeeping to be model employers. It is not enough merely to agree to fall in with Trade Union minima. These rates are not founded on justice, but on expediency. They are accepted as minima, the best possible, because the industrial and social system at the moment does not permit of higher rates. But a municipal Council can rise above the system and set it an example by paying a nearer approximation to just rates. Why should it not do so, so long as its controllers, the electors, give their consent?

It is argued that it is an improper position for workers to be at once the servants of a Council and their master as voters.

Is it an improper position for an employer to fix his own remuneration, to arrange his own hours of work? He does not think so. He does not think

it improper also to fix the wages and hours of his employees. Who should rule, the few or the many? A municipality is the whole body of citizens, and when they fix wages and conditions of municipal employees they are minding their own business.

THE BOGEY OF MUNICIPAL "DEBT"

THE whirligig of time plays strange pranks with facts, and in consequence, with arguments. A generation ago opponents of municipal housekeeping made our flesh creep with the bogey of "municipal debt." The burden of municipal debt, they assured us, would bring national ruin unless a halt was called. Financiers, statesmen, company promoters, tramway, gas, and electric shareholders, all joined in the cry. In those days the total municipal debt was about £300,000,000. . . . We did not call a halt. We said, up with municipal debt. . . . To-day the total debt is £800,000,000, and we are still smiling. This amount, it should be noted, is not the total capital invested in municipal undertakings, but the capital borrowed and not yet repaid. It is equal to about twice the annual expenditure of municipal authorities.

The most crushing argument used by the bogey brigade was a comparison between the burden of the national debt and the burden of municipal debt. Look at the poor citizen of Manchester, they wailed. His debt to the State is only £16, while his debt to the municipality is £29. . . . Awful. Awful

nonsense. . . . And now observe how *tempus fugit* has twisted the totals round. The national debt to-day is about £160 a head. The municipal debt is less than £20 a head. Is the bogey dead? By no means. At every municipal election the scare-mongers warn us against the crime of increasing the municipal debt. . . .

Is any debt a burden? It may be. Is every debt a burden? . . . No. The man who owes money for rent, food, and clothing feels that debt is a cruel burden. He cannot imagine debt being a benefit. . . . But a mile away a business man is happy just because he is in debt. He has borrowed £10,000 from the bank at 5 per cent., and he is making by its use 10 or 15 per cent.

Obviously, there are debts and debts. Burdening debts and beneficial debts. . . . In which class is the national debt? The total is about £7,000,000,000, nearly ten times the municipal debt. Is it nearly ten times the burden? Let us see. No one denies that it is a burden. Half our taxation goes to the payment of interest on it and its partial repayment . . . in spite of which it grows bigger. We do not make a profit on it like the business man, although private individuals wax fat on it. Have we any assets to set against it? . . . Very few. . . . If we sold all the national property, we could pay off perhaps one pound in seven. So six thousand millions is sheer dead weight burden.

The opponents of municipal housekeeping tell us that municipal debt also is sheer burden. Is that true? . . . On the contrary, it is sheer benefit. . . .

What assets have we against the debt of £800,000,000? . . . We have one asset alone that would wipe out the entire debt . . . our 178,000 miles of highways and streets, which are valued at not less than £1,000,000,000. Then we have thousands of public buildings, schools, halls, libraries, art galleries, museums. We have numerous harbours, piers, docks, bridges, parks, and baths. . . . We have a thousand waterworks, 246 gasworks, 300 electricity works, and 167 tramway undertakings. . . . If all these properties were valued and sold they would fetch four or five times the amount of the municipal debt. . . . Does municipal management pay.

On this municipal debt we pay interest, and we pay into sinking funds which in time pay off the debt. The enemies of municipal housekeeping point out that this is a burden of 2s. 6d. in the £ on the rates. Is it a burden? It would be very nice if the debt were wiped out. It would be jolly if we had no need to borrow. But we have either to borrow, or allow the municipal services to be run by private enterprise, and private enterprise also has to borrow. Which is the cheaper? Which benefits the citizens most? . . . If we left the services to private enterprise, as we used to do, they would cost us twice as much. The burden would be unbearable. In this case, being in debt is beneficial.

On the national debt we pay in interest £300,000,000, ten times as much. What do we get for it? . . . Nothing. . . . Nothing but the receipt. . . . Not even thanks.

In time our municipal properties become free of debt, unless, of course, we incur fresh debt, which we do if it is a payable proposition. Look at Glasgow, a city where, during the last fifty years, wild and wicked wastrels have piled up a municipal debt of £15,500,000, on so-called "trading" undertakings. They are not trading undertakings. They are services provided at cost price. Is this debt a burden? Take the tramways. The debt is £1,250,000. The assets are nearly £7,500,000. . . . The electricity undertaking: debt, £6,250,000; assets, £8,750,000; water: debt, £2,500,000; assets, £5,500,000; gas: debt, £4,000,000; assets, £5,250,000.

Suppose Glasgow had to sell all these undertakings. What would they fetch? . . . About £29,500,000; a surplus of £14,000,000 . . . equal to £30 per head for the adult population. . . . Does municipal management pay?

The bogey-mongers are very clever, but what is the difference between the debt on a municipal undertaking and the capital of a private undertaking? There is none. Both are borrowed money. Both are debt. The municipalities have borrowed for electric undertakings £103,000,000. Where did the money come from? From investors. It is called debt. The private companies have a total capital of £55,000,000. How did they get it? . . . They borrowed it from investors. . . . Is this a debt? . . . Yes. In the balance sheets it is called a liability. What is a liability? . . . A debt.

The bogey-mongers talk about our debt being a burden. What about theirs? . . . Of the muni-

capital capital borrowed for electric undertakings, £44,000,000 has been paid off. We have done that after paying interest on the loans, and after charging lower prices for current. . . . Does municipal management pay? . . . Yes. We actually make larger cash profits than the companies in some years . . . and we do not seek profits, but efficient service. . . . In time the debt will all be redeemed, and the current will be still cheaper. . . . Meanwhile, the private companies are charging higher prices and pocketing profits. . . .

The consumer pays . . . the consumer who shivers at the cry, beware municipal debt! . . . Why can't he learn to mind his own business?

THE BURDEN OF RATES

MUNICIPAL housekeeping services are provided at cost price. Yet the average citizen grouches more about the burden of rates than about the burden of taxes, or the burden of profiteering. Why is this? First, because rates must be paid, whether you be rich or poor, while some taxes may be evaded, to some extent, by both rich and poor. Second, the enemies of municipal housekeeping keep up a continual propaganda of lies, misrepresentations, and depreciations of municipal housekeeping. With them, rates are always "high" or "extravagant." Always a burden. Third, rates are, in fact, in very many cases a burden, not because they are the

result of extravagance, but because they are levied under an unjust system.

Rates, generally speaking, are levied on a basis of rent. Suppose your house is assessed at £20 a year, and the rates are 10s. in the £. Then you pay £10 a year, nearly 4s. a week. If your income is £2 a week, that is rather a heavy slice, although you know that you would have to pay twice as much for the same services if provided by private enterprise. A mile away, there is a big house assessed at £100 a year. The rates on that are £50. But the owner has an income of £2,000 a year. He does not feel the burden of the rates. He pays only 1/40th of his income, while you pay 1/10th. Is this fair?

There is a hullabaloo about high rates. There always is. The profiteers say it is due to municipal extravagance. Is it? Let us inquire first, are the rates high? In 1914 the total amount raised from rates in England and Wales was £71,000,000; in 1925, the total was £142,000,000. Twice as much. Is this an awful advance?

In the first place, it is not twice as much. The value of money in 1914 was greater than in 1925. Let us put the amounts on the same money level. Then they read: 1914, £117,000,000; 1925, £142,000,000, an increase of £25,000,000, less than a quarter greater. Is that an awful advance? Note two facts. Since 1914 the population has increased by about one-eighth. This has naturally involved an increase in the cost of municipal housekeeping. Say £14,000,000. This gives us a legitimate increase to £131,000,000.

The second fact is, increase in rates due to unemployment. Before the war (1913-14) the cost of poor relief was £15,000,000 (or £25,000,000 at 1925 values); in 1925, it was £37,000,000, an increase of £12,000,000. Add this to our total of £131,000,000 and we get £143,000,000. Whereas the real expenditure was only £142,000,000. It seems, then, that the real truth is, municipal housekeeping costs have decreased, judging them by normal times. It is perfectly clear that the increase is not due to "extravagance." Is the cost of unemployment extravagance? No doubt some of the profiteers think so. But I am asking human beings.

Another thing is quite clear. That is, our expenditure on municipal services has not been increasing as it ought to have done. As the reader knows, many services have been curtailed in response to the economy stunt. This is not good housekeeping. We are handicapped by the unjust system, and until that is reformed the ratepayer will grouse. But he ought to understand *why* rates are a burden, and how much they are a burden.

When are rates high rates? Lord Gess writes to *The Times*, or to the *Chowbent Gazette*, and points out with horror that the rates in Poplar are 25s. in the £; in Gateshead 23s. 9d. in the £; in Gellygaer 32s. 4d. in the £, whereas in Oxford the rates are only 7s. 8d. in the £; in Kensington 10s. 1d.; and in Bournemouth 8s. 9d. in the £. Terrible! Do these figures mean anything? Nothing at all.

What is Lord Gess's aim? It is to persuade the ratepayer that the towns with the low-figure rates

are economically governed, and that the towns with the high-figure rates are extravagantly governed. Is this inference contained in the figures? No, it exists only in the muddled or immoral imagination of Lord Gues. It may be said that if Poplar has a rate of 25s. in the £ one year, and 35s. in the £ in the next year, the 35s. is a high, or a higher rate.

It is, however, merely a guess to conclude that Poplar's rate of 25s. is a higher rate than Kensington's 10s. 1d. The rateable value of Poplar, that is, the value of the properties on which the rate is levied, is less than £1,000,000. The rateable value of Kensington is nearly £3,000,000. Thus a 1d. rate in Poplar brings in £4,000; a 1d. rate in Kensington brings in £12,000. Now work it out. In 25s. there are 300 pennies. Total rates raised, £1,200,000. In 10s. 1d. there are 121 pennies. Total rates raised, £1,452,000. Marvellous! It appears that the low-rate borough actually spends more than the high-rate borough. Lord Gues must guess again.

Take the case of Bournemouth and Bootle. Bootle rates, 13s. 1d.; Bournemouth, 8s. 9d. Bootle, as Lord Gues would promptly guess, paying apparently 50 per cent. more than Bournemouth. What are the facts? Bournemouth total rates, £440,000; Bootle, £354,000. It is Bournemouth that is "extravagant." Or is it lucky?

Let us take an illustration from two big cities—Westminster and Birmingham. The Birmingham rate last year was 16s. in the £. The Westminster rate was 9s. 6d. Is 9s. 6d. equal to 16s.? Of course

not, says Lord Guess. What a silly question. Well, Birmingham, with a 16s. rate took out of the pockets of the ratepayers only £4,224,000, while Westminster took £4,309,000. Which is the larger sum? Guess.

You cannot judge the highness or lowness of rates by comparing your rate in the £ with that of another town taken haphazard. You cannot conclude that because Bradford spends £5 9s. per head of the population, and Portsmouth only £3 per head, that Bradford is extravagant. Both towns may simply be minding their own business—efficiently.

It ought to be clear, even to the comprehension of Lord Guess, that no two towns have exactly the same problems of municipal housekeeping to solve. For example, the areas of municipal government vary. Eastbourne has an area of nearly 7,003 acres; Blackburn has an area of 7,650 acres. The difference is not great; but consider the populations. Eastbourne, 62,000; Blackburn, 126,000. Consider the difference in type of town. One residential and health resort, the other manufacturing.

Bodmin has 5,500 people on 2,800 acres. Bury has 56,000 on 5,900 acres. How can you compare the sewerage rate, the education rate, the highway rate of these two towns? The rateable value of Bodmin is £25,000. The rateable value of Bury is £375,000. Lord Guess would say that Bodmin's rate of 11s. is higher than Bury's rate of 10s. 6d. In fact, Bury spends £3 6s. 8d. per head, while Bodmin spends only £2 10s. per head.

All the rate comparisons of the Guess tribe taken together tell us nothing. The only genuine test of

rates is, are we getting value for the money spent? If we are, the highness or lowness of the rate is of no consequence—provided the sum levied on each citizen is justly apportioned.

Another trick of Lord Guesse is to seize on the accounts of municipal "trading" undertakings showing cash losses which fall on the rates, and to assert that municipal trading, in consequence, causes high rates. I need scarcely repeat what I have said about the necessity of taking into consideration "hidden profits." It pays sometimes to make cash losses, if only for the one reason that the municipal trading undertaking keeps the profiteer out.

Again, if you take the whole of municipal trading undertakings—water, gas, electricity, and the others—there is no cash loss. There is a cash surplus. So that when Lord Guesse says that municipal trading losses are responsible for the doubling of the rate in the £ since 1914, he is talking through his teeth, and his teeth are false.

The ratepayer is right in grouching about the burden of rates. But in guessing where and why they are a burden, he goes wrong. I have said that he gets municipal services at cost price. That is true. It is also very sensible of the citizen. But when he pays for services at cost price, which bring in benefits worth a hundredfold, and then hands over those hundredfold benefits to a few profiteers, is it any wonder rates are a burden? And what kind of a sumph is the citizen?

For example, we have spent about £75,000,000 on highways and street improvements. The profiteer

of the past built mean streets and slums. The enlightened citizens of the present wipe them out or improve them. The surrounding property thereupon goes up in value enormously. To whom is that value due? To the citizens. Do they get it? No. The landowners get it. Lord Gess and Company. And then they talk about our "extravagance" in spending rates on education!

In 1870 the rateable value of London was £18,500,000. To-day it is £56,000,000. The land value in 1870 was £8,000,000. To-day the land value is £24,000,000 a year. Who made the increase? The workers of London, of all classes. Who gets it? The landowners. This sum would pay nearly the whole of the rates now levied. Instead of which, the intelligent citizens pay of their hard earnings. And grieve about it. Doesn't it serve them right? Why don't they mind their own business?

It is the same all over the country.

In 1898 a syndicate with a capital of a million pounds offered, at their own cost, to "improve" a large area in Westminster. To widen streets and make new ones; to pull down old houses and build new ones; to construct a new embankment from the Parliament House to Lambeth Bridge. All for nothing. Good citizenship? No. Just profiteering. They expected to make millions of profit. But what nincompoops! Why offer to pay for such improvements? Are there not millions of ratepayers willing to pay, and to let the landowners reap the benefits and profits?

Oh, yes! Rates are a burden. But we are not

burdened with brains. Our basic industries are nearly in ruins. In the steel industry the increase of rates in the cost of production is in some cases from 100 to 300 per cent. higher than before the war. We know that rates have not increased by 300 per cent., but we know that production has fallen, and that in consequence unemployment has increased, and that in consequence Poor Rates have risen enormously in certain areas, and that in consequence the burden on these industries is unbearable.

❧ Poor Rate in Tynemouth has increased 666 per cent. In Wallsend 696 per cent. In Gateshead 633 per cent. In Sheffield 397 per cent. And so on. The stricken areas have been left to shoulder a burden which in fairness should fall on the national taxes.

Unemployment is not a local responsibility. It is a national responsibility. Lord Guess howls about the high rates in these areas. It is surprising that in some of them the rates are actually lower than in 1914—if we leave out the increase due to abnormal unemployment. There is no municipal extravagance. What, none? Well, it is not where Lord Guess finds it.

The extravagance is to be found in the new De-rating proposals of the Conservative Government. Certain "productive" industries are to be relieved of the burden of three-quarters of their rates. Agriculture (already relieved of three-quarters), is also to be relieved of the last quarter of its rates. Who is to pay? The taxpayer, and we are all taxpayers. We are to pay the £24,000,000 required for this purpose.

Now, amongst the "productive" industries are

breweries and distilleries, and tobacco factories. They all make fabulous profits. Yet we, whose rates are not reduced, would have had to pay £400,000 a year to rich brewers, and £250,000 a year to rich tobacco manufacturers had there not been a General Election in the offing. So this gift was balanced by extra taxation.

These are hard times—and rates are a burden. Nevertheless, a citizen of Manchester, living in a house rented at 10s. pre-war, pays to-day about £9 a year for all the municipal services—health, education, roads and streets, police and justice, housing, parks and open spaces, municipal bands, and all the rest. Where, I ask, could he buy as much at the price from private enterprise? Still, rates are a burden. If we wish to shift it where it belongs we must Mind Our Own Business.

THE LIMITS OF MUNICIPAL HOUSEKEEPING

OUR innate conservatism is the same to-day, yesterday, and for ever. . . . Well, almost . . . Every reasonable person—and the reader, of course, is a reasonable person—admits that the services provided by municipal housekeeping are cheaper and more efficient than those provided by private enterprise. The question at once arises, why not extend the scope of municipal housekeeping? If municipal gas, if municipal trams, if municipal electricity, why not municipal milk, why not municipal coal, why not municipal boots, why not municipal hats?

The answer of innate British conservatism is that municipal housekeeping may be very well as far as it goes, but . . . Why this but? What reasons are there for limiting municipal housekeeping? The out-and-out opponent of municipalisation protests that it interferes with profiteering. We need not consider that argument here. Are there any other arguments against perfect freedom in municipal housekeeping?

Two plausible objections used to be put forward. The first ran something like this: There is a class of undertakings which are naturally, or tend to become, monopolies. Under private monopoly the public loses the benefits of competition, and has no control over a service which may be vital to the welfare of the community. Such undertakings ought to be managed by the municipality, but none other.

The second argument laid it down that it would be unfair for the whole body of citizens, the municipality, to enter into competition with private traders, who, as ratepayers, would provide part of the funds used to set up rival undertakings.

Now, when the first argument was promulgated, monopolies in trade were the exception, not the rule. Competition was then assumed to be the soul of business, and the disciples of the Manchester School had realised, almost with horror, that water supplies could not be left to competitive warfare. Nor streets, nor roads, nor gas. The disadvantages of competition in these services were obvious, because the disadvantages hit everybody. Even so, the advocates of private enterprise preferred a private

monopoly to a municipal monopoly, and, where they could, established one.

To-day, the position is vastly different. Most of the vital services, not yet municipalised, are honey-combed with trusts and price controlling associations. We hear little to-day about the benefits of competition. We hear a good deal about the benefits of combination, and fusion, and rationalisation. Monopoly, or quasi-monopoly, is the order of the day.

It is clear then, on the principle enunciated, that a large number of industries are ripe for municipalisation, or nationalisation. They are tending to become monopolies, and the public has lost the benefits of competition.

The supporters of the principle of municipal housekeeping have always argued that the benefits of competition are, at the best, illusory. At the worst, as the great mass of people have known them, they have been intolerable. Private monopoly is no less intolerable, and unless we are to go back to "free" competition, the only alternative is municipalisation, or nationalisation.

I come now to the second argument against the extension of municipalisation, that it would be unfair to compete with private traders "with their own money." . . . There is a certain plausibility about this objection. It sounds so terribly un-British to propose to band together the million citizens of Manchester to set up a fried-fish shop in opposition to John Smith, the one man fried-fish emporium.

I am not going to tell Mr. Smith that competition is the law of life, and that he has no more right to object to the competition of a municipal fried-fish shop than he has to object to the competition of a fried-fish shop established by William Robinson, or by the Fish and Chip Company Limited, or by the Smackfisheries Trust Limited. I am going to ask him if he has not observed that the small man is being eaten up by the big combine. He has . . . If the small man is big enough he may sometimes be bought out, but very often he is just wiped out, and that is the end of John Smith.

I suggest then to the private trader who is in danger of annihilation by the trend of things, that is, by trusts, that it is to his interest to support municipalisation. Over the action of the multiple-shop trusts he has no control whatever. Over the actions of the corporation, or the councils, he has. As a citizen, he can demand, and will obtain, that consideration and fair treatment which are his due.

What then are the limits to municipal house-keeping? Apparently there are none, in principle. We can go ahead with new experiments in milk, coal and other industries as soon as Parliament gives the powers. Recently, however, a new obstacle has presented itself. The Co-operative Movement . . . which says politely enough . . . Mind Your Own Business.

MUNICIPAL HOUSEKEEPING OR
CO-ÖPERATIVE HOUSEKEEPING

THE reader will remember that I have frequently emphasised the often forgotten fact that municipal housekeeping services are provided at cost price. The same principle applies to national services. The enthusiastic advocate of municipalisation and nationalisation thereupon concludes that in order to abolish profit it is necessary to municipalise or nationalise all other services. Unless he happen to be a member of a co-operative society. Why municipalise me? he asks. The co-operative societies already supply goods and services at cost price.

Here is a new problem. Twenty-five years ago, when there was a little boom in municipalisation, the Co-operative Movement hardly came into the picture. To-day, it is bulging large on the canvas.

Twenty-five years ago municipalisers said, "Let us go forward and municipalise coal, and milk, and boots, and meat, and beer," and there was no end. To-day the Co-operative Movement, with its capital of over £175,000,000, its annual sales of £300,000,000, its membership of over 5,600,000, its 225,000 employees, its banks, with a turnover of £700,000,000, its manufacturing establishments, including food, textiles, clothing, footwear, furniture, soap, and many more, its fleet of ships, its warehouses, and thousands of stores, says pardon me, where do we come in?

The problem may have to be faced very soon. If

a Labour Government grants unlimited powers of trading to municipalities, Councils with a Labour majority will certainly begin new experiments. For example, suppose Sheffield or Manchester citizens wished to have coal or milk at cost price. How should they achieve their aim? Through the municipality, or through the Co-operative Movement?

This question goes to the root of the matter. Co-operators say there are many citizens of Manchester and Sheffield who are now getting coal and milk at cost price. It is open to the whole of the citizens to join the co-operative societies and enjoy the same benefits. Thus the problem is solved.

Suppose, however, that only a majority of the citizens wish to have coal or milk at cost price, and do not want to join a co-operative society—not all of them. Suppose they vote for a municipal coal or milk supply. Is the Council to buy out all other traders in coal or milk? Is the Council to permit free competition, and trust to its superior organisation to gain all the trade?

The Council would be justified in adopting either course, but the second one would be entirely foolish. Given free competition, the existing private traders, and perhaps new ones, would fight. They would supply below cost, and try to ruin the municipal undertaking. Even the co-operative societies might follow the same tactics. What a spectacle! I refuse to visualise it.

Presumably the Council would compensate existing traders, or buy them out at a fair price. In that case the co-operative societies would be shut out

from that area. The co-operators are aghast at the prospect. And they are full of arguments against such developments.

Logically, on the question of principle, municipalisers are in a very strong position. The Co-operative Movement is a voluntary movement. It seeks to establish a co-operative commonwealth by winning people to its ideals through persuasion and argument. It organises the production and distribution of commodities on the basis of consumers' control. It has built up an enormous business. But its membership does not embrace the poorest of the community. And the benefit of the goods at cost price is therefore not for them.

Municipalisers say our ultimate ideals are the same, a co-operative commonwealth in which production and distribution will be controlled by the community, but we cannot wait while you convert everybody by and to your methods.. With a majority on the Council we can embark on undertakings and supply all, including the poorest, at cost price. Surely it is our duty to do so. By our method we shall reach the goal much quicker. That is the logic of the situation as it soon may be, but logic does not rule the world ; we say that love does, and in this case it is much to be desired that sweet reasonableness at least should be manifested by both sides.

Many municipalisers are also co-operators, and therefore should be able to see what is of substance in the arguments of both sides. The problem is a difficult one, and the solution will no doubt vary in different localities and circumstances. It is obvious,

I think, that it would be folly for the advocates of municipalisation to injure or weaken the Co-operative Movement in this transition stage. It would equally be folly for the Co-operative Movement to fight municipalisation merely on sentimental grounds. Co-operation should be the watchword of both sides, though in any given case it might lead to the triumph either of co-operative methods or municipal methods.

Surely there is no need to quarrel as to which is the best way to mind our own business.

Fortunately, both movements recognise the importance of preparing for coming developments, and the problem is being discussed in the light of realities. A Committee of the Co-operative Union investigated the question last year and reported that the Co-operative Movement is doing 10 per cent. of the national milk trade, 20 per cent. of the butchery trade, 8 per cent. of the coal, and from 25 to 40 per cent. of the bread sales. In each case co-operative sales are increasing faster than the growth of population. After discussing the pros and cons of municipalisation the Committee concluded "that, in relation to the distributive trades, the policy of development by co-operative societies offers the most practical and satisfactory way of extending collectivist principles in meeting the needs of the community."

The Committee realised that if its claims to undertake these services is to be made good, the Co-operative Movement must set up adequate distributive organisations, offering goods at cost price, or as near cost price as possible. It therefore urged a policy of

energetic development on the societies, so that co-operative services might be available everywhere. This report was approved unanimously by the West Hartlepool Congress in May 1928, and it was decided to ask the Labour Party to discuss the conclusions with Co-operative representatives. The I.L.P. also appointed a special committee to consider the problem. The Committee put forward several useful suggestions for the solution of the difficulties and conflicts that may arise in the future, and altogether there seems to be no reason why the two movements should not combine amicably in devising methods of minding our own business in the Distributive Services.

A LABOUR COUNTY COUNCIL

THERE are millions of efficient housewives and housekeepers. How many efficient municipal housekeepers are there? You may throw a stone haphazard and be sure of hitting a house, clean, swept, dusted, warmed, ventilated, furnished—inhabited by healthy, well-fed, more or less contented people, as efficient as industry can make them. You would have to take very careful aim if you wished to hit a whole town, or a county, ruled by municipal housekeepers which could make the same boast. Is there one?

We have 30,000 local authorities, yet not more than a score are controlled by men and women who believe thoroughly in the principles of municipal housekeeping, and who do their best to apply them. Elsewhere the principles are applied in a spasmodic

and half-hearted way. In patches, glorious results have been achieved. What a transformation could be effected if we had 50 years of real municipal housekeeping!

Who believes in municipal housekeeping, and embraces its principles wholeheartedly? The Labour Party. The only party that does. Does municipal management pay? The proof that it does is overwhelming. Can Labour govern? Can Labour keep municipal house? The proofs are only beginning to appear, but they are convincing. Let us look at some of them.

The Monmouthshire County Council was ruled from 1925 to 1928 by Labour. Of 86 members, 49 were Labour, including one solitary woman. Their opponents called themselves the Coalition. This Coalition of all the talents had left a few legacies for the Labour Party. For example, Labour was in power from 1919 to 1922, and left a cash balance on elementary education of £107,921. The Coalition spent this money, and had to go to the bank for loans in order to carry on, although they had had the advantage of the great fall in prices which occurred during their term of office.

Can Labour govern? What is the test, the only test (and a bad test) of the enemy? Rates. Well, after three years of Labour rule, are the rates higher? Are they not much higher, owing to Labour extravagance? Not a penny. There is no increase in rates. Moreover, still more marvellous, the Labour Party actually spent less money than the Coalition. From 1919 to 1922 Labour spent £2,788,010. From 1922

to 1925 the Coalition spent £3,124,793. From 1925 to 1928 Labour spent £3,035,461. Which is the real economy party? But you cannot judge only by the money test. What have the citizens got for the Labour expenditure?

The Labour Party maintained all the numerous services at the highest point of efficiency. Some of them they extended considerably. How could they do this and spend less money? By good management—by watching every penny and getting value for it. They saved £150,000 on the roads, bridges, police, and other departments. They found that money was wasted by overlapping. They co-ordinated the work. They employed direct labour.

On one section of roads, under a scheme for the unemployed, a saving of £4,230 has been made—although £1,800 has been paid for time lost through wet weather, although new plant and machinery has been bought, although a char-a-banc for free conveyance of workmen, and a hostel for 50 of them have been provided. Do you wonder that the county surveyor reports that the men have worked loyally and that the output has sometimes been surprising?

Save the rates, say Coalitions. Labour saves the rates, and saves the citizens, too. Since 1915, when the maternity and child welfare centres were established, the infantile death rate has been reduced from 137 per 1,000 to 66. Last year infant foods to the value of £6,277 were sold at cost price. Dried and fresh milk, £2,469. There are 41 child welfare centres, and the number of visits totalled 69,284. Municipal housekeeping.

Remember, too, that much of this health work is necessitated by the mismanagement of past municipal housekeepers and profiteers. It is a sort of municipal spring cleaning.

The Monmouthshire County Council spends £650,000 on education. There are 228 school departments, 55,000 scholars, 5,000 higher education scholars, and 1,800 teachers. The average cost of elementary education in the counties of Wales and Monmouthshire is £11 17s. 4d. In Monmouthshire the cost is £10 18s. 4d. Labour economy.

The Labour Party have expanded the education facilities, notwithstanding the acute depression in the coal industry. They have opened four new elementary schools, four central schools, one new secondary school, and two new mining schools. During the lock-out they spent £10,000 on meals for children. No contractors. In a Government report on mining education Monmouthshire was given first place. They are providing four institutes for evening students—one is already open. There are twelve miner students at University College, Cardiff, and last year three took their B.Sc. degree. They would not be there but for Labour rule.

The Labour Party believes in providing the best, because it knows that the best is the cheapest. One of the most up-to-date elementary schools in the country is now being built at Newbridge. The saving will be £5,000, and on the usual three years' programme the total saving will be £70,000. Does municipal management pay?

During the coal lock-out of 1926 the Monmouth-

shire County Council, which spends £100,000 on the police service, resisted proposals to incur extra expenditure on imported police. They trusted the people to keep the peace. With what result? In Gloucestershire the extra cost was £20,750. In Glamorganshire £36,300. In Nottinghamshire £36,960. In Derbyshire £60,000. In Monmouthshire £1,015. Fivepence per miner, against £4 per miner in Gloucestershire. Can Labour rule?

This is by no means a full story of all the good work achieved by the Monmouthshire County Council under a Labour majority. But it is enough to prove that we can Mind Our Own Business.

A LABOUR CITY COUNCIL

ALTHOUGH the Labour Party had demonstrated its fitness to rule in a number of London boroughs and in several provincial boroughs and urban and rural districts, it was not until November, 1926, that its supporters carried it to victory in one of our large cities. The news that Sheffield had elected a Labour Council sent a thrill of horror and alarm through the profiteering nerve ganglia of the whole country. What! Sheffield, that a generation ago had for its Mayor a real live Duke? Sheffield gone Socialist? It was the beginning of the end of all things.

It certainly was the end of some things. For instance, it was the end of a filthy and abominable system of privy middens which had cursed the city for a century.

The Press campaign of calumny began at once. The Sheffield City Council was incompetent. It was corrupt. It was engaged in enterprises which would ruin the ratepayers. And so on. Great London newspapers exposed its machinations, and at the end of the year it was confidently expected that Sheffield would sweep the mad majority of Labour Councillors into the street. Instead of which Sheffield added one more to that majority, and said, in effect, carry on.

What had the Labour Council done to deserve this compliment? Nothing very alarming. They had reduced the rates for municipal housekeeping by rod. in the £. That was one thing, the one thing that should prove to the supporters of the profiteers that Labour can govern. But the calumny still goes on.

The Labour Council had also done other things, things which proved to their own supporters that they were worthy of the trust reposed in them. Let me mention a few. But, before doing so, I would warn the reader again that under present conditions even a Labour Council cannot achieve results that will only be possible when a Labour Government has endowed our local authorities with the powers needed for free and efficient municipal housekeeping. Sheffield, like other places, has to bear the burdens of past mismanagement. For example, its debts and its rates are encumbered by payments for £2,000,000 for street improvements and for £526,000 paid to the Duke of Norfolk for market rights which never ought to have been in private ownership.

To begin with, the Labour majority found that their predecessors had left them with a bank over-

draft of £1,000,000 at $5\frac{1}{2}$ per cent. interest. Another £500,000 would be needed in the next few months, so, flouting tradition, the Council floated a loan for £1,500,000 at £100 10s. per £100, and got the underwriting done at 7s. per cent. lower than the other party had been able to do. The Press rang with stories of the frenzied finance of the Socialist nincompoops, and the transaction resulted in saving the ratepayers £10,000 a year. Can Labour rule?

Business men get elected to Councils, but either they do not take their business principles with them or business principles are lacking in efficiency. The Labour majority discovered that the organisation of committees was clumsy, so that they overlapped and got in each other's way. They reorganised and harmonised them, and the machine worked in consequence much better.

Sheffield's education facilities were not exactly A1. The schools were overcrowded. For example, one hut for a hundred infants. In some districts accommodation was entirely lacking. The Labour majority tackled this problem at once. Two new schools, with 1,500 places each, were put in hand, one built by contract and the other by direct labour. Observe the wiliness of this experiment. These harebrained Socialists were astute. They might have built both by direct labour, but the object-lesson of the way adopted would be more impressive for the electors who are not yet converted to commonsense. A similar division was made when new tramcars were needed. Twenty-five were ordered from private enterprise, twenty-five were built by direct labour.

The problem of housing was attacked with equal energy, and by careful attention to estimating and by the use of direct labour a reduction of £40 per house was effected. A new fire station was built by direct labour, and for the first time the staff will be housed decently. Can Labour rule?

The epileptic Press had fits of the frothiest when the Labour majority proposed to establish its own printing department in order to save the profits on a yearly bill of £30,000. A by-election happened about the time the question was being discussed, and it was fought on the sanity of this wild cat scheme. The Citizens' Association candidate, who opposed the proposal, polled 800 votes out of 3,400. The cash profit on this department for the year ending Dec. 31, 1928, was £7,315.

The health services were overhauled and improved in many directions. Tuberculous treatment was made free. The smallpox epidemic was dealt with energetically. The privy middens were abolished. Sanitary dustbins were supplied with unprecedented celerity.

Under Labour rule Sheffield can make the proud boast that it has the largest acreage of open spaces amongst all cities. A large stretch of moorland on the borders was acquired, and within the city 300 acres of woodland marked down previously for building.

The poorer consumers of electricity who are supplied by the slot meter system benefited by the frenzied finance of the Labour majority to the extent of a 25 per cent. reduction. The tramway and 'bus

services were improved and cheaper fares for children were instituted. The police force policy was changed, with resulting improvements which won Home Office recognition. The markets were reorganised. The blind were humanely cared for.

In short, the Labour majority indulged in a mad orgy of municipal housekeeping, and at the end of its first year the rates were reduced by 10d. in the £. Economy, efficiency, and enthusiasm had won through. Can Labour rule? Can we Mind Our Own Business?

A LABOUR LONDON BOROUGH COUNCIL

WOOLWICH is famous the world over as a centre for the manufacture of death-dealing implements. It is not so well known that Woolwich is also an arsenal of facts on the burning topic—can Labour rule?

The twenty-eight London boroughs were created in 1900, and there seemed small chance of Labour majorities for many years ahead. At the first election Labour candidates at Woolwich were unknown, but eleven Progressives won seats. At the next election in 1903 Woolwich Labour won twenty-five seats out of thirty-six, and came into power, one of the first, if not the first, of Labour Councils. This crushing success, following the wonderful victory of Mr. Will Crooks at the Parliamentary election in the same year, roused the enemy to marshal all its latent forces, and in 1906 Labour

suffered a reverse. In 1912 success again was only missed by a trifling margin, and but for the war Labour would have been in power in 1915. In 1919 the party repeated its original triumph by winning twenty-five seats, and ever since Woolwich, the once impregnable stronghold of Toryism, has been ruled by Labour.

If the Royal Humane Society presented medals for life-saving on a comprehensive basis London Labour Councils would in recent years have collected an unmanageable number of decorations, and amongst them Woolwich would have shone conspicuous. When Labour came into power in 1919 the infant mortality was 106 per 1,000 births. Last year the rate was only 42 per 1,000, the lowest figure but one in the whole of the boroughs, the Holborn rate being a fraction less. In 1918 the general death rate was 14.3 per 1,000. Last year it was only 10.6, and this was the lowest rate in London. Can Labour rule?

Statistics are dry and forbidding things to most people. Suppose the 2,242 women who gave birth to babies in Woolwich last year had been collected in one large hall, with their babies in their arms, and suppose they had been addressed by the Medical Officer of Health, and told by him that under the Health services as they were run in 1918 237 of their babies must die within the year, but under the health services as they are run by the Labour Council only ninety-three of their babies must die within the year. Can you see the faces of those mothers? A saving of 144 infant lives. Which lives? Perhaps my child's. Anyhow, 144 lives to be saved. How? By choosing

human representatives for local government. How do you think those mothers would answer the question, can Labour rule?

There are seven welfare centres in Woolwich, and the attendances of children have since 1918 been multiplied by twelve, while the attendances of nursing and expectant mothers have been multiplied by fifteen. Which figures seem to suggest that the mothers of Woolwich are answering the question in the affirmative.

Woolwich had an acute housing shortage after the war. There were 7,400 applicants waiting in the queue. The new Labour Council, encouraged by the Ministry of Health, made plans for building 1,200 houses in 1920. Alas! They had not built 1,200 in five years. Was it the Council's fault, this delay? By no means. It was due to the economy fever at the Ministry of Health. But the Labour Council has harried and worried the Ministry so successfully that more than 2,000 houses have been erected up to date, and Woolwich stands near the top of its achievements in housing.

Naturally Woolwich has been amongst the pioneers who have striven for the principle of direct labour, and, after a long tussle, the Council obtained the permission of the Health Ministry to build several hundred houses by this method. The result was as they had foretold. They saved as much as £99 per house compared with the price by contract, and what is more, they built their houses in twenty-two weeks against the thirty-six weeks taken by the contractor. Can Labour rule?

How soon could you start in Woolwich? asked Mr. Lloyd George. To-morrow, promptly replied the Mayor, Councillor A. M. Tynemouth. Say next Monday, retorted the Premier. And the work was started on the Monday. This is the Woolwich way—under Labour rule.

The work referred to was work for the unemployed, being the construction of new arterial roads. Since that talk with Mr. Lloyd George in 1920 the Council has spent three-quarters of a million on useful and necessary schemes for new roads, widening and improvement of old roads, sewers, open-air swimming baths, the extension of electricity mains, and so on. All these measures have served to build up the wealth of the community and have contributed directly to the higher standard of health and prosperity attained during the last nine years.

It used to be a common gibe against would-be Labour Councillors that they had no "business" talents. They could spend rates perhaps, but could they run a business? If you repeat this old gibe at Woolwich they will introduce you to the accounts of their electricity undertaking. What do these prove? Well, amongst other things, they prove that the electricity undertaking under the business-men Tories made losses of £20,000 a year, and that under the unbusinesslike rule of Labour the losses were turned into profits, in some years of an equal amount, £20,000, and more. But cash profits are not the aim of municipal housekeeping. Last year the cash profits were £10,000, but prices for current to domestic consumers have been reduced. The price of $\frac{1}{2}$ d. per unit

for water boiling is a record, and Woolwich has more cooking apparatus connected than any undertaking in the country except one or two large cities in the north. Does municipal management pay?

What about rates? It is a story in itself. But, briefly, rates since 1922 have been steadily reduced from 18s. 5d. to 12s. 10d., and of this the Labour Council is responsible for incurring only 4s. 2d., the remainder being collected for other authorities. Can Labour rule?

As I said, Woolwich is a perfect arsenal of facts (a few of which I have culled), which prove that its Labour Councillors can Mind Their Own Business.

A LABOUR URBAN DISTRICT COUNCIL

THE urban district of Hayes, Middlesex, is situated eleven miles west of London. The district is rather flat, the chief prominence being the fact that for the last ten years (except for one year) a Labour Council has been in power. Can Labour rule? Obviously this question has generally been answered in the affirmative. Even in the year 1924-25 of Labour's defeat the majority of the enemy was only one, and since then the Labour Party has so completely won the confidence of the electors that it holds now ten out of fifteen seats.

The population of Hayes is a growing one. In 1921 it was 6,300. To-day it is well on the way to 12,000. A large part of the district is agricultural, but most of the residents are occupied in one or other

of the many factories which have sprung up during the last few years, with a variety of products which ranges from screws to cheese and from gramophones to linoleum. Naturally, in such circumstances, one of the most urgent problems facing the growing community has been the problem of housing. How has this problem been tackled?

Various large municipalities, like Birmingham, have treated themselves to a little back-patting because they have built since the war municipal houses sufficient to house so large a proportion as one-tenth of their population. A fair record, perhaps. How much greater then is Hayes' excuse for indulging in self-congratulation. By the end of 1928 the Hayes Urban District Council had built 1,200 houses, which is about one-third of the number of houses in the district. Why have they built so many houses? Because the Labour Party has been in power. In the year the Opposition was dominant housing was held up. Labour came back—and the good work goes on. In the last four years 412 houses have been built under the Wheatley Act. Can Labour rule?

The residents of Hayes have not only been supplied with an adequate number of well-planned houses, they have also been supplied with cheap houses, and thereby hangs a tale. I believe the Ministry of Health looks upon the Hayes housing estate as one of its model schemes. If you take a walk into the surrounding districts of Harefield, Uxbridge, and Hillingdon you will find that rents are higher by five or seven shillings, and the people of Hayes who pay 8s. 6d., 9s. 6d., and 10s. 6d. for their Council houses have

need to be grateful that they are, and have been, ruled by Labour.

Had they not been ruled by Labour it is extremely probable that the tenants and residents of Hayes would have had to bear an increased rate of 1s. in the £ for at least ten years, or the tenants of the municipal houses would have had to pay much higher rents. At first the Ministry wanted to fix rents at 12s., 14s., and 15s. exclusive. The Council protested before the tribunal and got them reduced to 9s., 10s., and 11s. Later on the Labour Party put the case for a further reduction and obtained 6d. on each type. This was Minding Their Own Business.

Four years ago the Ministry of Health dropped in a bombshell to the effect that subsidy to the amount of £4,166 was disallowed. The Tories suggested that rents be increased for ten years in order to meet this deficiency, and at one election they told the electors that otherwise they would have to bear the burden, which would mean an extra rate of 1s. in the £. The Labour members said, let us fight the Ministry, and, being returned to power, they fought the Ministry for three years, with the result that practically the whole sum in dispute has been won for the tenants. There will be no increase in rents, nor will there be an extra burden on the rates. Can Labour rule?

The Labour majority at Hayes is very keen on finance, and I do not suppose they would feel abashed if they were invited to show the London County Council how to manage this department of local government. A penny rate in Hayes pro-

duces about £400. A penny saved is—yes, a penny earned. So is a half-penny. During the last three years the Labour majority has saved the ratepayers £200 by the simple method of paying its bills within a month and claiming the usual $2\frac{1}{2}$ per cent. discount. It is just as keen in getting in the money to pay with. In the year of Tory rule the Councillors were threatened with surcharge because of failure to collect rates to the amount of £1,342. Under Labour rule there is less than £100 outstanding. Can we Mind Our Own Business?

During the last three years the Labour majority has saved for the ratepayers a further sum of over £1,000 by various devices in connection with its loan and banking arrangements. Instead of having the balances of different departments in separate accounts at the bank it amalgamated them, and now gets interest on the day to day balance beyond a certain amount. It arranged with the Ministry to take back unexpected loans, and so saved on the interest. It saves the rates by avoiding borrowing for undertakings of a comparatively unimportant character. In 1927, for example, the rate was 2s. 8d. in the £ for the first half of the year. In the second half-year the rate is 2s. 6d. The 2d. extra in the first half-year brought in the sum of £800, which was used for improvement of the fire brigade and the provision of central heating at the Town Hall. Pay as you go—where you can—is the motto of the Labour Council at Hayes. Can Labour rule?

One way of testing the efficiency of local government is to examine the death rates. The Hayes death

rate is between six and seven per 1,000. In similar districts in England and Wales the figure is about eleven per 1,000. The infantile death rate of Hayes is 35 against 67. Hayes also shines in the birth rate, 24 against 17 per 1,000.

This is by no means the whole story of the Labour majority at Hayes, but it is enough, is it not, to prove again that we can Mind Our Own Business?

THE RIGHT CANDIDATES

IN the foregoing chapters I have tried to convince the reader that the rights he or she possesses as a citizen carry with them responsibilities. I trust I have been successful. I said at the outset that to mind your own business is simply commonsense. I have indicated and described briefly what is your business, and now you know, it is up to you. Go and mind your own business.

It is a pity that citizenship, and particularly civic pride, are not more thoroughly inculcated in our schools. If they were we should all grow up to manhood or womanhood and take to minding our own business as naturally as ducks take to water. We should not need reminding that the schools in which we were educated are our schools, that the streets we walk are our streets, that the library is free because we pay for it, that the trams are our own, and the parks, and the baths, and the art gallery. Nor should we need elementary instruction regarding the upkeep of these and a score of other services. We

should know all about rates and debt, and the scare-mongers and profiteers who attempted to rob us of the advantages of municipal housekeeping would receive short shrift.

Under the Romans a citizen who did not vote was deprived of the rights of freemanship for a year. We have amongst us advocates of compulsory voting, who would penalise the defaulters. It would be an interesting experiment to clap an extra penny in the £ on the rates of all citizens who did not vote. How would you like it? Would it induce you to mind your own business?

It is a fact that millions of people have been robbed of air and sunshine, of health and comfort, and convenience and education and pleasure, just because a large number of citizens would not or did not know it was their duty to mind their own business. Millions have been robbed of life, especially infants. Our municipal housekeeping has been inefficient. Wonderful as its achievements have been (I have chronicled some of them), it is still inefficient, still far below the standard every citizen infected with commonsense wishes to see it attain. The murders and robberies are still going on. Because in many cities and urban districts only half or less than half the citizens will take the trouble to vote.

Philosophers tell us that the ruling passion of mankind is self-interest. Very well. Here is an appeal to self-interest. As I have shown in the previous chapters municipal housekeeping provides numerous services at cost price. Nothing the citizen buys is so cheap. His water, his sanitation, his trams, and so

on bear no burden of profit. Why, then, in the name of commonsense, does he not vote for more municipal housekeeping?

Why not milk, and coal, and meat, and beer, and boots?

We have no need to be ashamed of the self-interest which impels us to expand our municipal housekeeping, for it is an enlightened self-interest which brings benefits not only to ourselves, but to all our fellow citizens. It is only by combining with our fellow citizens that we can achieve this miracle of obtaining things at cost price. And when all the citizens of a municipality combine to provide for themselves all the things they need for the common life, you have a condition in which self-interest is ennobled to the highest degree.

"The noblest sort of heart," it was said in the Florence of Giotto's day, "is that composed of the united will of many citizens."

Our municipalities are vested with wide powers. Why do they not use them to the full? Why are there slums in your town or urban district? Why are there insanitary houses? Why are there unhealthy workshops or dairies? Why are there chimneys belching black smoke and fouling the air your children breathe? Why are your streets ill-paved and dirty? Why are you lacking in parks and playgrounds? Why have you no municipal band or orchestra, no free library? Why are you short of houses? Why, just because you, the intelligent citizen who would cause a riot if some politician proposed to take away your vote, have not the com-

nonsense to use your vote, and get these services provided for yourself and your fellow citizens. Thou art the man. Thou art the woman.

In future, of course, you will turn over a new leaf. You will vote, and you will vote for the right representatives in your Councils and Corporations, men and women who will use the municipal powers now available to the fullest extent possible, men and women who will always be on the alert to press Parliament for further powers if considered necessary to the welfare of the municipalities. It will be your responsibility and your pride to select such candidates to work for their return, and to watch and pray for them when they are elected.

Who are the right representatives? you ask. What does commonsense suggest in answer? Surely the first qualification of a candidate is that he or she believe in municipal housekeeping. Now, many of our representatives on the Councils to-day do not believe in the principle of municipal housekeeping, and they get themselves elected (by you not voting) expressly for the purpose of preventing you from enjoying the full benefits of your citizenship. It is for you to detect these wily impostors, and to substitute for them men and women of the faith.

So far as I know there are no municipal Councillors or municipal Council candidates who accept fully the municipal housekeeping principle here set forth—except Labour members and Labour candidates.

Who are the right representatives for you, then? Clearly the Labour candidates, for it is they and they only who will efficiently mind your own business.